595 664 651 by immediate death. For this reason it was necessary, when a woman became pregnant, for her to be able to name one or more lovers of appropriate subcaste who might have fathered the child. These men must then acknowledge their responsibility by paying the expenses of delivery (petta chilavu - clothing, rice and vegetables) to the barber-midwife who attended at births. If no appropriate lover came forward to do so, the woman was deemed to have cohabited with a low caste man and was excommunicated. Even today, a girl who becomes pregnant before the (modern) marriage ceremony is easily exculpated if she can name a Nayar or higher caste lover who will pay her deliver expenses. She is then by old custom tacitly regarded as having been married to him, and if he chooses not to visit her again, has little difficulty in finding a second husband. If however no expenses are paid, she is assumed to have had relations with a low caste man, a Christian or a Muslim, and though excommunication is not now effectual, she falls into social disgrace. She is unlikely henceforth to find a Nayar husband, and her household may find difficulty in marrying away other girls of her generation

595 586 In addition to the delivery expenses, a Nayar of the local subcaste group who entered into a relationship with a girl was expected to present her with a loincloth on the first night of visiting her. Thereafter, if he continued to visit her, he must make customary gifts of clothing, [75] bathing- and hair-oil, and vegetables, at Onam, Vishu and Tiruvadhira, (10) the three main

595 festivals of the year. If he failed to do so on one
586 of these occasions, it was a tacit sign that he had ended the relationship. However, it seems clear from the literature that though a woman might have a small number of regular visitors of her local group - or even only one - these had no exclusive sexual rights, and that she might receive others at will if they were passing through her village. The evidence in uncertain, however, about the total number of men a woman might entertain concurrently. Nicolo di Conti (1444) writes that "The Nayar women are allowed to take several husbands, so that some have ten or more". Varthema (1510), writes that "One woman has five, six or seven husbands, or even eight. And one sleeps with her one night and one another night" (p. 146). These reports suggest that the number of lovers a woman might have was limited. Hamilton states that in the eighteenth century this was definitely so, and that a woman might have "twelve but no more at one time." (p. 310) Barbosa, however, writing in 1520, says that "in addition to the three or four lovers whom every woman has, they never refuse themselves to any Brahmene or Nayre who gives them money." His view is supported by Pietro della Valle (1624), who says "The Gentile Nairi have no peculiar wives, but all women are common amongst them" (II, p. 379). It seems probable, therefore, that each woman had a small number of fairly regular lovers who made ceremonial gifts to her at the festivals, but that a man might without difficulty gain access to a strange woman when he was

595 away from his village on military service. Buchanan, as late as 1807, reports that Nayar women vied with each other as to the number of lovers they could obtain. (p. 411).

595 584 644 [76] Until late in the nineteenth century, women evidently had freedom to choose their own lovers. This was until recently still the case in the royal lineages, where women selected their lovers from a small group of aristocratic Nambudiri families. Young men of these families were introduced into the palaces by older kinsmen already established there, and might become ensconced as regular occupants of the Nambudiri quarters until such time as they were dismissed by their royal mistresses. The princes of the lineage appear to have had little say in arranging these unions. I was told by one informant that the senior Raja periodically held an audience at which Nambudiris currently living in the palace were presented to him by his secretaries, but that otherwise he had little knowledge of

595 584 marital life within the palace. Today, as also in commoner lineages, this is no longer the case: monogamy has been customary in all subcastes for the past forty to fifty years, and the prospective husband of a woman is selected by her karanavan or elder brother. In orthodox families of the retainer subcastes, at least for the past fifty years, the karanavan or the elder brother of a woman has had the right to dismiss a husband of whom he disapproved. Alternatively

[582] a woman may still, as of old, divorce her husband at will by refusing him admittance or causing her kinsmen to place his sleeping mat

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

WOMAN-DAUGHTER

A woman was her daughter's immediate mentor and moral authority throughout her life. Whereas a son entered the company of men and boys after about the age of seven, a daughter returned to her mother's intimate care after the tāli rite. From her mother and from older women of the taravād a girl learned cookery, household and child care, manners, morals, and minor agricultural work. As her daughters came of age a woman took personal pride in their dress, jewelry, and physical attractions. It is said that formerly mothers and other matrilineally related women instructed girls in the arts of love. A woman should spend her life in her mother's household, and she should obey her, taking over from her more and more of the household responsibilities. She should defend her mother in disputes with other women, offer her companionship in old age, and perform funeral and anniversary rites for her soul after her death.

A daughter replaced her mother in the social structure and was expected to resemble her in character, as indeed she often did. A woman's constant care for her daughter's welfare became particularly prominent during the latter's pregnancy and parturition, when the mother must be at hand to offer counsel, good food, and medicines. So long as they respected her and did not encroach on her authority, she should welcome her daughters' husbands with cordiality. If, however, a husband's conduct gravely displeased his mother-in-law, she had the right to ask her daughter to reject him. A dutiful daughter would usually do so; if she refused, the mother might place her case before the kāranavan and request that the husband be dismissed.

Behavior between mother and daughter was usually informal, and they had few secrets from one another. In the privacy of their home and in the absence of men, matrilineally related women of today discuss their affairs and their neighbors freely, sometimes with hilarious mimicry. Mother and daughter were expected to have occasional quarrels. Indeed, there was often a deep undercurrent of rivalry between them which might break out into acrimonious mutual scolding. A daughter should bear patiently her mother's reprimands, but even though she struck her mother in anger her bad conduct would be forgiven more readily than the neglect of a son. A mother would also often try to shield her daughters from anger on the part of the kāranavan, of the mother's own brothers, or even of her sons. Mother and daughters usually maintained unity in disputes with other segments of the taravād, and it was axiomatic that mother and daughters stand united in disputes with other households.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

MAN-SISTER

593 Within the kinship circle, a man's concern for his sisters should come second only to that for his mother. He had greater authority over them, but he owed them similar protection and consideration. If he became their kāraṇavan, he must manage the property on their behalf and educate their children to the best of his ability. A woman owed her brother domestic services, obedience, and devotion. Brother [581] and sister should, when necessary, subordinate their own marital interests to each other's comfort and welfare.

593 561 The elder sister shared something of the mother's role; the younger sister, that of the sister's daughter. Indeed, as in all relationships within the taravād, the significance of age surpassed that of generation; for when age and generation were discrepant the attitudes appropriate to age overrode those appropriate to generation.

A much older sister might help to bring up a boy in the same manner as the mother's younger sister. As he grew to maturity her attitude combined sharp criticism with maternal solicitude. When both were adult, however, difference of sex became a greater determinant of authority than did difference of age. Although she might continue to speak informally with him or even to upbraid him mildly, the elder sister stood in her brother's presence and received his commands with respect. If he became kāraṇavan, the younger brother's ultimate legal authority was unquestioned. His sister might, however, remain his trusted counselor for life.

[588] Until her tāli rite a girl played freely with her elder brothers and was affectionately patronized by them. After this time an outer formality was required between them, identical with that preserved toward the sister's daughter. Inwardly the relationship was expected to be more intense, with less authority and more tenderness on the part of the brother, less fear and more devotion on the part of the sister, and today, in speech with others, young childless women often [604] display a simple hero worship for their elder brothers. As a woman's [578] children grew to maturity, her brother's discipline of them might create tensions in the sibling relationship. She should, however, con- [586] tinue to submit willingly to his wishes. A man who was not her kāraṇavan had no right to dismiss his sister's husband from their home. Nevertheless, a woman who knew that her brother deeply disliked her husband would feel it her duty to reject him.

593 835 The very formal behavior required between a man and his younger sister is consciously related to incest prohibitions. Sibling incest is in fact very rare and was traditionally punished by death. Enough

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

A husband normally visited his wife after eating supper in his natal home, and left before breakfast. Even today in many orthodox Nayar homes men eat regularly in their taravāds and accept food in their wives' homes only on special invitation from their wives' kāranavans. Traditionally a husband placed his weapons outside his wife's door as a sign to other men that he was within. My informants in a Cochin village reported that, within living memory in the late nineteenth century, if two husbands called on the same night the one who came last might sleep outside on the veranda. Usually a woman's regular husbands knew each other and informally agreed upon their turns.

The relationship with the visiting husband was called *sambandham* (Sanskrit, "joining together"). At the start of a girl's first sambandham her husband came to her house privately at night, sometimes with a few friends of his own age. In the presence of the girl's kin he presented her with a white cloth of the kind worn as a skirt. The occasion was not marked by feasting. Later husbands might or might not present the cloth. A transient visitor is said to have left a gold coin beneath the woman's pillow, and a regular husband might do the same on the first night of his union.

While his relationship lasted, a regular husband was expected to make gifts to his wife at the three main festivals of the year. Vishu, in April, was the Malayalam New Year; Onam, in September, was a harvest festival; Tiruvadira, in December, was a women's festival to Kama Devan, the god of passion. The gifts were of bathing oil, bananas, wafer biscuits, and betel leaves and areca nuts for chewing. In some areas a husband also gave a loin cloth of superior quality at Onam. The gifts were prepared by women of the husband's taravād, and he should present them in person to each of his wives on the festival day. If a husband failed to make these gifts it was a tacit sign that he had ended the relationship. It should be noted that the gifts, trivial in value, were gifts of courtship and were in no sense maintenance. Bathing oil is a feminine toilet requisite; wafer biscuits are delicacies served at feasts; and the giving of chewing materials between a man and a woman is everywhere in South India associated with courtship or with the first night of marriage. A husband had no obligation at all to maintain his wife, for she received her food, shelter, and regular clothing from her taravād.

The only other obligations of a husband came at the birth of a child. When a woman became pregnant it was necessary for one or more men of appropriate caste to acknowledge possible biological

2: Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949) 1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

paternity. This they did by making gifts to the woman herself and to the midwife immediately after the birth. Any man who had visited the woman in the appropriate time period was required to make these gifts. If a man refused, he could be called upon by the caste assembly to fulfill his obligation. The gifts comprised two new lower cloths for the mother and one cloth and a quantity of paddy as payment to the Nayar woman barber who attended at the delivery. Again, these gifts were clearly legal and ceremonial tokens rather than objects of substantial economic value. Legally, however, their transfer was of the utmost significance. For if no man would consent to make the delivery payments, the woman was assumed to have had sex relations with a man of lower caste or with a Muslim or a Christian. Her caste assembly would temporarily excommunicate her taravād until she and her child had been driven out by their kāranavan and the woman's funeral rites had been performed. The woman, presumably with her child, might be executed by her matrilineal kinsmen or allowed to become a slave of the district chief or the king. If the woman and her lover were publicly exposed even before the birth of the child, both might be put to death.

A woman had no obligations to her husbands other than the granting of sexual privileges. Nayar husbands of the woman's own caste occasionally dined in her household but this was a favor and not a right. Nayar households sometimes provided uncooked food and a separate building for Brahman or chiefly husbands, but this again seems to have been a matter of courtesy rather than of obligation. Husbands of higher caste made the same gifts to their wives as did Nayar husbands.

In the nineteenth century her kāranavan selected a woman's first husband, and he may have done so at earlier periods. Until the 1930's many kāranavans also retained the right to dismiss a husband who displeased them. It seems improbable, however, that a woman or her kāranavan would ever refuse the visits of a Brahman, chief, or village headman of powerful standing in the community. In some cases also a husband of higher caste seems to have monopolized the favors of a Nayar woman, a privilege not accorded to men of her own caste. K. Kannan Nair reported (1908: 186) that until a century previously local chiefs sometimes compelled a woman to receive as husbands those of her enangar who wished to marry her. In general, however, women seem to have been free to reject particular men, and both men and women to terminate liaisons without formality.

In all possible respects attempts seem to have been made to reduce

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

In all possible respects attempts seem to have been made to reduce
the intensity of marital ties for the sake of the unity of taravād, 595
village, and kingdom. Good men were men who devoted themselves 613
first to the service of their feudal lords, and second to the welfare of 597
their taravāds. Weak and immoral men were men who became in-
veigled by their wives and their children, so that they tried to make
unnecessary gifts to their wives and neglected their taravāds. An ideal
kāranavan was one who broke off his marital ties in old age and de-
voted his energies solely to his sisters' children. Institutional recogni- [593]
tion of emotional attachments between spouses was reduced to a 595
minimum. If a man by accident died in his wife's house his body was 764
immediately brought home for cremation by his lineage kin. After a
man's death his current wives were permitted to come and view his 613
corpse. They were then ceremonially conducted out from the north
side of the house—the side opposite to that from which the god of
death had come. They must not look back at the house of death and
they might never visit it again. They and their children took no part
in the funeral or the subsequent anniversary rites nor did they observe
death pollution.

In spite of the institutional precautions, undoubtedly some men 595
formed strong emotional attachments to particular wives and their 754
children. The institution of sorcery came into play at this point 613
(Gough, 1958). Among Nayars, sorcery was practiced mainly against 593
affines; it was ineffectual within the lineage. It was believed to be
practiced most by junior members of a taravād against the matrilineal
kin of their kāranavan's wife. The reason was that if he were particu-
larly attached to a wife, the juniors of a kāranavan might fear that he
would transfer to her gifts and cash which belonged legally to his
taravād. They could not make their complaint in law, for the
kāranavan was their legal representative. Instead, they are said to
have secretly engaged low-caste practitioners to recite spells and
make offerings to some minor malevolent deity with the object of
bringing sickness upon the wife or her kin. If they suspected such
evil doing, the members of the wife's taravād might in turn hire a
"good" practitioner of their own who would appeal to some other
deity to return the misfortune to the senders. It is clear that Nayars
did hire "good" practitioners to perform countermagic against af-
fines; whether in fact they hired evil practitioners to perform sorcery
in the first place is uncertain. At all events the institution of sorcery [54]
provided a covert outlet for interpersonal hostilities between affines
which could find no expression in open conflicts between their groups
as a whole. The result of the hostilities was often termination of the [586]

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

particular marriage, for the spouses, unable to bear the machinations of their relatives, would often end their relationship.

I have called these Nayar institutions "marriage" because they limited and regulated sexual relationships and because they served to legitimize children. The provisions of both the tāli rite and the sambandham were directed toward these ends. The tāli rite was both a legal and a ritual institution. First, it symbolically conferred sexual and procreative powers upon the girl. The mock menstrual seclusion, the rites to the fertility goddess, and the "defloration" all indicate this. Second, it took the sexual rights in a girl away from her matrilineal kinsmen as soon as they had been conferred. This appears in that the girl and her elder matrilineal kinsmen must observe the rules of etiquette associated with incest prohibitions from the day of the tāli rite. Third, it transferred the sexual (but not the procreative) rights in the girl to a representative of her caste in the person of an enangan. Fourth, however, this man at once renounced his rights in his capacity as an individual, after which they became available to men of the caste, and of appropriate higher castes, as a group. All of this was accomplished in good time *before* the girl actually attained puberty and was capable of entering fruitfully into sexual liaisons. It was strictly forbidden for a man to have relations with a girl before her tāli rite, and if the rite was not performed before puberty she was expelled from caste.

With regard to the sambandham institution, sex relations were not promiscuous. They were forbidden within the lineage, within a certain range of affines (discussed below), and, most categorically, with men of lower caste. It was therefore necessary to have some procedure for legitimizing children, to show that they had been fathered by men standing in the appropriate roles. The legally obligatory payments by husbands at the time of birth accomplished this, and if no one could be found to make the payments, the woman and child were expelled from the caste.

It was appropriate that a woman should wear the tāli throughout her life and that she and her children should observe death pollution for the ritual husband rather than for any particular visiting husbands. For neither the ritual husband nor the visiting husbands had rights in the woman *as individuals*, nor had the woman or her children individual rights in them. After renouncing his individual rights, however, the ritual husband remained for life, in relation to this woman, the representative of his caste, which in law had collectively married her and collectively fathered her children.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

595 monial recognition through the performance of death pollution, but that was strictly all.

842 Nayars did, however, understand and attach significance to the physiological role of the male in procreation. They expected a child [829] to resemble his genitor and to be unusually intelligent if his father were a Brahman or a Nayar aristocrat. A man is said to have been 593 especially fond of a child whom he knew with reasonable certainty to be his own. He would make small gifts to him, play with him on visits, and offer him friendly counsel as he grew older. However, a man had no right to interfere in any way in his child's training, and [586] the child had no customary obligations to him. If he ended his relationship with the mother he had no further contact with the child.

Children addressed all their mothers' husbands as acchan, adding [601] the caste title in the case of a father of higher caste. Both boys and [564] girls stood in the father's presence and accorded him respect, but without the extreme submissiveness due to an older matrilineal kinsman. In spite of the Malayāli adage "No Nayar knows his father," it seems probable that almost every Nayar regarded some particular man as his genitor; but his relationship with this man might be anything from a permanent, warm attachment to almost total lack of recognition. Certainly differences of paternity created no institutionalized divisions within a sibling group.

602 No rights or obligations existed between an individual and his patrilateral kin. These relationships, when they existed, were a matter of individual friendliness or of polite etiquette. A person might visit his or her father's taravād as long as the father's marriage [595] to the mother endured, especially if the father lived close by. However, although marriage has been monogamous for the past seventy to eighty years, I found in one Cochin village in 1949 that only 48 per cent of sibling groups containing children under fifteen had any contact with their father's matrilineal kin. In the other cases patrilateral relationships were suspended because the father lived at a distance, because he had divorced the mother, or because his kinswomen had quarreled with the mother.

[601] In what follows, the term "father" refers to any husband of the mother in the sambandham relationship, and the term "patrilateral kin," to the matrilineal kin of such a man.

Patrilateral kin of the father's generation or older were accorded [605] friendly respect. Cross cousins of the same sex and caste had a familiar, mildly joking relationship if they maintained contact with one another. If their families remained friendly, cross cousins of

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

opposite sex might talk to each other with rather more freedom than to unrelated persons. In his role of enangan a boy sometimes tied the tāli for his maternal uncle's daughter or stepdaughter of suitable age.

There were no incest prohibitions with patrilateral kin, although a man was unlikely to marry his father's own sister because of age differences. Marriage to the father's or stepfather's brother or brother's son was neither prohibited nor preferred. Modern informants thought that if a girl was known to be one's father's daughter by another wife, marriage with her would be avoided as indelicate, but it was apparently not prohibited. The children of brothers were not considered related, and provided they belonged to different lineages, they might marry or not as they chose.

Bilateral cross-cousin marriage was freely permitted, with some preference for marriage to the mother's brother's daughter or stepdaughter. A kāranavan was particularly likely to encourage his nephew to enter marital relations with a daughter of the kāranavan's favorite wife. In this case it was felt that the marital interests of uncle and nephew would be harmonized and the nephew might be less likely to accuse the uncle of infidelity to the taravād if he favored his wife and her children. Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is said to have been less favored because it did nothing to smooth the relationships between men of a taravād. It may, also, have been less common because a man had no influence in his son's choice of a wife.

It may seem strange that preferred cross-cousin marriage should have existed side by side with group marriage, for cross-cousin marriage, especially when it is arranged by the senior generation, suggests an interest in prolonging the ties brought about both by paternity and by matrilineal kinship. Group marriage, by contrast, tends to negate the claims and interests of individual fathers. Today, the fact is that cross-cousin marriage is arranged only with the child of an uncle who has had a long and satisfactory marriage relationship. It is never deliberately arranged as a first marriage, with the child of an uncle's previously divorced wife. Further, although young people agree to arranged cross-cousin marriages, they may and fairly often do later dissolve the marriage if things do not go well. One presumes that similar circumstances existed in the days of group marriage. Many men, presumably, entered marriage relations with cross cousins only incidentally—often, presumably, without being fully aware of the blood relationship. It seems quite probable that at other times some men did have an enduring relationship with a particularly

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

613 597 eage with which one was neither at enmity nor in regular asymmetrical political relationships. Thus the Travancore royal lineage several times adopted from Kolattiri, at the other end of Kerala, and the Calicut lineage from Nileswaram, the northernmost independent chiefdom of the Malabar Coast.

613 262 564 The giving and receiving of food, normally a hallmark of caste ranking, presented other problems. Some royal lineages were vegetarians and employed Nambudiri Brahman cooks who, being ritually higher than themselves, were permitted to serve them with food. Others seem to have drawn to themselves a small group of lineages as cooks and houseservants upon whom they conferred equivalence of caste rank, while maintaining them as their social inferiors and not intermarrying with them.

613 RESIDENCE AND KINSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

592 593 554 The property groups of village headmen's and chiefly lineages had residential arrangements similar to those of retainer Nayars, except that their houses were larger. The men of these groups visited their lower-ranking wives in the latters' homes. If they lived nearby, visits would occur at night; if at a distance, the husband might visit his wife about once a month and remain for two or three days. Similarly, women of these groups received visits from their higher-ranking husbands at convenient intervals. If he came from a distance the husband brought his own servants and cook, occupied a building near the taravād house, and stayed at his conjugal family's expense.

613 344 554 592 In the royal lineages each property group occupied a large palace. Within it each princess had her own suite of rooms in company with her children under the age of fifteen. Princes over this age had private rooms in a separate wing. The Nambudiri Brahman husbands of princesses (who were younger sons in their own households and had no managerial duties) lived at the palace for the duration of their marriages and were maintained at its expense. In the daytime they occupied a building within the royal courtyard, with its own bathing pool, kitchen, and servants, and visited their wives' rooms mainly at night. Junior princes visited their wives in nearby retainers' households or in more distant chiefly taravāds. Each royal sthāni had his own palace, estate, and retainers for the duration of his office. He would normally bequeath a house to a Nayar wife within the palace grounds and visit her and his children there.

595 554 [586] Although group marriage appears to have existed in theory among aristocrats, polyandry was in fact perhaps less common than among retainer Nayars. Princesses are said to have been sometimes poly-

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

androus and divorce was freely practiced, but a princess probably did not regularly entertain more than one husband at a time. Older Nambudiri Brahman husbands often introduced their own younger kinsmen into the palace; for this reason both matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and paternal parallel-cousin marriage were common in Brahman-royal unions. Princes, chiefs, and high-ranking Nambudiri Brahmans were sometimes polygynous. Their wives, however, were probably seldom polyandrous; for aristocrats seem often to have exercised the power to monopolize the attentions of their favorite Nayar wives. They were therefore more sure of the paternity of their Nayar sons, upon whom they sometimes conferred military or political offices.

In all hypergamous unions the husband observed the normal all-India caste rules of pollution except with regard to sexual intercourse. He might not receive food from his wife's caste and had little communication with her or her children in the daytime. Affinal relationships were correspondingly more restricted than in the retainer castes, for a woman had very little communication with her husband's natal kin; she and her children used no kinship terms for them. If the wife was of lower social as well as ritual rank than the husband she did not visit his natal home. Conversely, princesses do not seem to have demeaned themselves socially by visiting the homes of their ritually higher-ranking husbands. A Nayar wife who was of similar social rank to her Brahman or temple-servant husband might occasionally visit the womenfolk of his home, but she was received in an outbuilding and might not eat with them. Similarly, husbands in hypergamous unions had highly formalized and restricted relationships with the matrilineal kinsmen of their wives. The wives' elder kinsmen were accorded the respect due their age; the husband, that due his superior ritual rank.

Relationships between matrilineal kin among the aristocrats were a sharpened version of those found among retainer Nayars. Between men, the etiquette associated with age rank was highly stereotyped. Among the senior princes who were likely to compete for political office it reached the point of avoidance, a condition facilitated by their separate residences as sthānis. The etiquette of respect was similarly elaborated between men and women. After the age of fifteen a prince might converse with older women of his palace only by appointment and in some public place. He must scrupulously avoid the presence of younger kinswomen from the time of their *tāli* rite. In the potentially larger property groups of the aristocrats these rules of etiquette obviously militated against the expression of aggression between men as well as preventing incestuous relations between the sexes.

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

taravād. A woman might also visit for several weeks each year. Brother and younger sister, like a man and his sister's daughter, observed rules of partial avoidance—associated with incest prohibitions—during their periods of co-residence.

Sisters were always separated upon marriage, for the Nayars of this area, unlike those to the south, forbade the marriage of two brothers to two sisters. They say that such marriages would endanger the unity of the brothers' taravād by introducing into it too strong a contingent from another lineage (Gough, 1952). Sisters were together, however, during childhood in their father's house, and were often reunited in old age when they went back to the taravād. Although they might seldom have stayed there during childhood and early youth, women seem usually to have died in their matrilineal ancestral homes. A woman was often widowed in old age. Alternatively she might elect to leave her husband and return to her taravād and sons when her period of childbearing was ended. In any case a woman's body had to be cremated and her funeral rites performed in the garden of her taravād house.

Women in avunculocal residence were partly maintained by their husbands' taravāds in return for domestic services. Nevertheless, important distributive ties persisted between them and their matrilineal kinsmen. Usually their kāranavan sent quantities of grain and clothing to them and their children twice annually after the harvests as part of their maintenance.

MARRIAGE

Following the tāli rite, a girl entered into a marriage relationship (sambandham) with one man at about the age of eleven. The father's sister's son, if of suitable age, was considered the rightful claimant. If the girl did not marry him her kāranavan must pay a token fine to him at the marriage ceremony. The giving of the cloth by the husband which marked the start of a sambandham was carried out with ceremony in the girl's ancestral house and was the occasion for a large feast to relatives of both parties. After the marriage had been consummated in the girl's house the couple were ceremonially conducted to the bridegroom's taravād and the girl was formally received into it by her husband's mother and his kāranavan's wife.

While a marriage endured the husband had exclusive rights in his wife's sexuality. If he detected her in adultery he might by custom kill her lover, cut off the hair of his wife, and send her home after divorce. A woman was not, however, excommunicated from caste

3:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AW11 Kerala AW11
North Kerala Nayar

and her children were not illegitimate unless she had relations with a man of low caste.

A woman normally lived with her husband in his ancestral home or in a separate house on his ancestral land. He then owed her physical protection and at least a part of her food and clothing, in return for limited domestic services. Occasionally a man might choose to visit his wife in her ancestral home if she lived nearby. In this case he might work on her ancestral land or bring periodic provisions of grain and clothing to her and her children. He would eat sometimes in his ancestral house and sometimes in the house of his wife. In all marriages a husband was obliged to pay the full expenses of delivery when his wife bore a child in her ancestral home and, additionally, to supply grain and other food to her throughout the six months which she spent in her taravād at this time.

A woman owed respect and obedience to her husband. He had the right to scold or even to beat her if she disregarded his wishes. Polygyny was permitted and was fairly common among village headmen, chiefs, and royalty. The polygynous husband usually provided separate houses for his wives on his ancestral estate.

Theoretically, either party might divorce the other at will, but in fact it was usually the husband who initiated a divorce. We do not know how common divorce was in the traditional period. At present it is rare in wealthy landowning lineages, although it probably takes place rather more frequently than among aristocratic Mappillas of North Kerala. It is more usual among the poorer Nambiar commoners, although probably less frequent than among the poorer Tiyyars of this area.

Widows might remarry freely by traditional law. Today it is somewhat rare for a widow to remarry if she has children under the age of three or four; we do not know whether this was the case traditionally. A widow who does remarry almost invariably leaves her children by the first marriage behind in her taravād, in the care of her mother or some other older natal kinswomen. Such children may visit their mother in their stepfather's house but they have no customary rights of maintenance there, and it is considered that their own taravād is the correct place for them to live.

Thus in North Kerala, by contrast with Central Kerala, differences of paternity may create structural divisions among the children born of one mother. All are of the same taravād and share the same fundamental birth-status rights, but if their fathers were different they

3;Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
North Kerala Nayar

obligations, some fathers, especially kāranavans, kept their children residing with them for most of their lives and gave them property. A child owed his father obedience and respect. If a man divorced his wife her children also left him and might see little of him thereafter. However, they had to observe ritual pollution at his death and his eldest son took part in his funeral rites along with the chief matrilineal heir. The eldest son also made annual offerings to his dead father's spirit. In general the relationship with the father was thought of as intimate and loving. Children must respect him and a daughter must not touch him after her puberty. But having no legal authority, the father was not feared. His role was sharply contrasted with that of the mother's brother. Uncles were said to teach by scolding and punishment; fathers, by persuasion and laughter.

The father's kin had privileges and obligations at life-crisis rites—most of which took place in the individual's taravād house—and were feasted and made gifts at the ceremonies of first pregnancy, naming, first rice feeding, tāli tying, marriage, first menstruation, and death. At the naming ceremony, when a baby was one month old, the father's mother chose the name, the father's father conferred it, and the father presented the child with a gold waistband. The kāranavan fulfilled these roles in Central Kerala.

A person was forbidden to marry his father's sibling or paternal parallel cousin of the father's property group. Affectionate respect was the proper attitude toward all the father's older kin. The paternal grandmother played with a child but did not idolize him as she did her daughter's child, for he was not of her taravād. Unless he was also a child's kāranavan, the paternal grandfather was a distant kinsman who had little to do with his grandchild. The mother's father, on the other hand, usually doted on his grandchild and was a cherished companion.

Male cross cousins had a joking relationship and were often close companions. Their relationship might be tinged with hostility concerning the property of their respective father and mother's brother. Sometimes, at least in the nineteenth century, they quarreled openly over the inheritance and became enemies thereafter. Male and female cross cousins had a joking relationship with implicit sexual privileges if the girl was younger than the man. A boy who returned to his taravād at puberty often married his matrilateral cross cousin thereafter. Even if she married someone else he might sleep with her illicitly before or after the marriage. Elders were either ignorant or

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

and other female friends of the girl then approach, and give sweetmeats to the couple. The girl then serves food to the boy, and after taking their meals together from the same leaf, they proceed to the pandal, where a cloth is severed into two parts, and each part given to the Manavâlan and girl separately in the presence of Enangans and other friends. The severing of the cloth is supposed to constitute a divorce."

If, as has been said, the "páttu" sung by the Brâhmani, in "*Rig Vêdaswaram*" is in substitution for the Vêdas sung at the Nambûtiri's wedding—because the Vêdas cannot be used by any but Brâhmans—this part of the ceremonial seems to indicate imitation of the Nambûtiris. The Brâhmani is not however a "Brâhman lady" but merely represents one. In North Malabar she is of the Nambisan caste.

The ceremony is much more analogous to that obtaining in the Bellary district and round about it, through which women, called Basivis, are, after an initiatory ceremony of devotion to a deity, compelled (under certain conditions) to follow no rule of chastity, but whose children are under no degradation, than to the initiation of the Dêvadâsi in her career of harlotry.* It must be said, however, that the ceremony, more especially as modified by poor people, when the Manavâlan is represented by a clay figure adorned with flowers, the handiwork of the girl's mother, looks very like it. But what demands consideration now is the position of Manavâlan to the bride. Does the ceremony confer on him any of the rights of a husband? There is much diversity of opinion on the point. Some say it does, while some say it does not. It seems certain that, as a rule, there can be no cohabitation between the two as a mere corollary of the tâli-tying ceremony. Should there be three girls in a family, *i.e.*, in the same taravâd house, aged, say, 9, 5 and 3, the ceremony is always done for all three at the same time. The only condition as to age of the girl is that the ceremony must be done before she reaches puberty. The bridegroom (to call him so) is selected after consulting agreement between his horoscope and the girl's. He is seated beside her in the marriage pandal, and he invests her with the tâli. They eat of the same plantain leaf (used as a plate throughout Malabar). They are placed in the same chamber, to go through the fiction

* An account of the Basivis, their devotion to deities, etc., by the writer will be found in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay," Vol. II., 6 (1891).

564 613 588 [184] [586] [765] [783] of cohabitation; and on the fourth day the bridegroom severs his connection with the girl, symbolising divorce by cutting into two pieces the cloth (called kachai cloth) which she wears. The tearing of the cloth is, however, confined to South Malabar. These are the essentials of the ceremony, an adjunct to which is that, in spite of the divorce, the girl observes death-pollution when her Manavâlan dies. The same Manavâlan may tie the tâli on any number of girls, during the same ceremony or at any other time; and he may be old or young. He is often an elderly holy Brâhman, who receives a small present for his services. The ceremony is always the occasion of feasting and jollification. The girl may remove the tâli if she likes after the fourth day.

588 In some parts of Malabar there is no doubt that the man who performs the rôle of Manavâlan is considered to have some right to the girl, but in such a case it has been already considered that he is a proper man to enter into Sambandham with her. It will be as well to remark here that almost invariably amongst the inferior races, the aboriginals so to speak of Malabar, girls are married [832] (their marriage is consummated) before puberty. The fuss that was made a few years ago (by the shrieking sisterhood) about the age of consent has had no effect there.

613 585 [588] The tâli-tying ceremony having been performed while the girl is yet a child, the next step in the matter of her alliance with a man is the arrangement of the Sambandham. As the rule nothing more than the consent of the girl and of her guardian, the Kâranavan of the family, is necessary. There is no religious formality. The tâli-tying ceremony dispenses with everything of the kind. There is, however, in some parts a tendency now-a-days "to surround the occasion of first cohabitation with a more or less elaborate ceremonial." It is quite an informal affair, arranged by the Kâranavans of the two families. Many a time a young fellow of 22 or 24, answering my question whether he had contracted Sambandham with any one, replied that the head of his family had not yet arranged a Sambandham for him. The wishes of the contracting parties—for in great measure it is a contract—and of the heads of the families practically settle the matter. Should the parties find they are unsuited, they part. There is no dragging on under a bondage intolerable to both.

585 184 The following account was given by Mr. Chandu Menon (a Nâyar) to the Commission. He says:—

writes thus in speaking of the Nâyars:—"When the man visits the woman he lays down his arms at the door; but, if there are no arms at the door, any acquaintance may visit her. To visit the house when there are arms at the door, or remove them, is death." Now-a-days a man leaves his shoes outside the door. Equality of the sexes in all sexual matters, the man and woman being on terms of equality, having equal freedom, is certainly an uncommon merit in the Marumakkattâyam system. Either party may terminate the union—even after one night of hymeneal bliss; and those who are unsuited to each other sexually, or in the way of temperament, in fact in any way, may put an end to their union and turn towards other partners. It may be thought that this liberty induced perpetual change, so it is as well to state here that it does nothing of the kind. Mere arbitrary divorce is very rare. Permanent attachment is the rule. The basis of the system seems to be that the Taravâd estate is held in trust for the support of the females and of their descendants in the female line. This trust is placed in the hands of the Kâranavan, the senior male member of the Taravâd who is the legal guardian of every member of it, and whose control of the Taravâd property is absolute. The odd feature in the Marumakkattâyam system is that a man has his nephews about him in the house, and not his sons. He lives in one house, while his wife and family live in another. That is, in South Malabar; in North Malabar they live together.

When we come to consider the degrees of relationship within which marriage is prohibited, we find the rule is that persons descended from a common female ancestor are not at liberty to marry. Those of the same Taravâd can never intermarry; but this prohibition does not of course extend to the children of a brother and a sister, who are naturally of different Taravâds. Again, the principle that "no member of the Taravâd of a deceased wife or husband (is) eligible as the second wife or husband is true only as far as the woman is concerned; for a man may marry a woman of his deceased wife's Taravâd. But he who does this is not in harmony with social sentiment." We find this observance amongst the forest Mûppans of Wynâd. In the case of a man's wife dying, I found that a Mûppan could not take another wife from her family.

The rule does not interfere with union between the children (or their descendants) of a brother and sister

796 533 [515] the tank for the purpose. Then all or almost all of these plunge in the water and begin to take part in the singing that is presently to follow. One of these then leads off by means of a peculiar rhythmic song chiefly pertaining to Cupid. This singing is simultaneously accompanied by a curious sound produced with her hand on the water. The palm of the left hand is closed and kept immediately underneath the surface of the water. Then the palm of the other is forcibly brought down in a slanting direction and struck against its surface. So that the water is completely ruffled and is splashed in all directions producing a loud deep noise. This process is continuously prolonged together with the singing. One stanza is now over along with the sound and then the leader stops a while for the others to follow her in her wake. This being likewise over, she caps her first stanza, with another at the same time beating on the water and so on until the conclusion of the song. Then all of them make a long pause and then begin another. The process goes on until the peep of dawn when they rub themselves dry and come home to dress themselves in the neatest and grandest possible attire. They also darken the fringes of their eyelids with a sticky preparation of soot mixed up with a little oil or ghee; and sometimes with a superficial coating of antimony powder. They also wear white, black, or red marks lower down the middle of their foreheads close to the part where the two eyebrows near one another. They also chew betel and thus redden their mouths [526] and lips. Then they proceed to the enjoyment of another prominent item of pleasure, viz., swinging to and fro, on what is usually known as an Uzhinjal.*

796 264 262 [535] "On the festival day after the morning bath is over, they take a light meal and in the noon the family-dinner is voraciously attacked; the essential and almost universal ingredients of which being ordinary ripe plantain fruits and a delicious preparation of arrow-root powder purified and mixed with jaggery or sugar and also cocoanut. Then till evening dancing and merry-making are ceaselessly indulged in.

796 [586] "The husband population are inexcusably required to be present in the wives' houses before evening as they are bound to do on the Onam and Vishu occasions; failure to do which is looked upon as a step or rather the first step on the part of the defaulting husband towards a final separation or divorce from the [132] wife. Despite the rigour of the bleak December season during which commonly the festival falls, heightened inevitably by the [515] constant blowing of the cold east wind upon their moistened frames, these lusty maidens derive considerable pleasure from their early baths and their frolics in water. The biting cold of

* A swing made of bamboo.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

a Sanskrit word meaning 'the noble one') the Malayalam word used by Nayars for the *genitor* and all lovers of the mother. The *appan* had no obligations to nor rights in a child except that, at his death, the child observed pollution. Nevertheless, Pālakkara informants stressed that the *appan* was a child's 'real father', as the *tāli*-rite was a woman's 'real marriage'.

In Walluvanād and Calicut a different custom prevailed. After the final feast, the couples repaired to the marriage shed, where each ritual bridegroom tore in two the loin-cloth which had been worn during the three days of seclusion by his bride, retaining one half and handing the other to the girl. This ritual divorce indicated that the bride, though still in the status of a married woman, was now free to cohabit with whom she wished. She might however still take as lover the bridegroom who had divorced her. In spite of the 'divorce', the bride and her children observed pollution at the death of the bridegroom. In those lineages where the *tāli* was tied by a man of higher sub-caste, no cloth was severed after the rite, but the bridegroom, being an elderly man, was unlikely to cohabit with the girl again. However, she must, with her children, observe pollution at his death.

At some periods and in some areas of South Malabar and Cochin it seems that the ritual bridegroom was forbidden to enter into *sambandham* with his bride. In 1510 Barbosa stated that the *tāli*-tier was sometimes a 'relation' of the girl, and in this case, when he had tied the *tāli*, he must go away 'without touching her nor more to say to her on account of being her relation'. If, however, he was not a 'relation', 'he may remain with her if he wish it, but he is not bound to do so if he do not desire it' (*ibid.* p. 124). Unfortunately, Barbosa did not define the categories of 'relations' who might tie the *tāli*, but the accounts of all other writers leave no doubt that the ritual bridegroom could never have been a matrilineal kinsman of the girl. It is probable that, the *tāli* being tied either by an *enangan* or by some elderly man of higher sub-caste from which the lineage was wont to draw lovers, the ritual bridegroom might sometimes be a man who had previously had relations with some older woman of the girl's lineage. In this case he would be prohibited from entering into *sambandham* with her by the rule which forbids a man to have relations, serially or concurrently, with two women of the same lineage.

Buchanan, an East India Company doctor, seems to assume that the *tāli*-tier must deflower the bride, but might never cohabit with her thereafter. In 1800 he wrote of South Malabar Nayars: 'The Nayars marry before they are ten years of age, in order that the girls may not be deflowered by the regular operations of nature; but the husband never thereafter cohabits with his wife. Such a circumstance, indeed, would be considered as very indecent' (Buchanan 1807, p. 411). But Buchanan's account may be untrustworthy, since he later says of North Malabar Nayars: 'The female Nayars, while children, go through the ceremony of marriage, both with Nambouries and Nayars; but here, as well as in the south, the man and wife *never* cohabit' (*ibid.* p. 513; my italics), thus contradicting his earlier statement that the 'bridegroom' must deflower the bride. However, Logan (1887, p. 135), though he does not say whether the *tāli*-tier was expected to deflower the girl, states that in South Malabar the ritual husband might not solicit his 'wife's' favours in after-life.

Since I have not seen the *tāli*-rite, but relied on informants' statements, the above account is necessarily incomplete. I now add details provided by earlier writers.

For Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, II, pp. 22–9) reports that in privileged families, the Maharaja gave permission for the rite, and the woman's kin made presents to him and to important Nambūdiris before it could take place. In retainer-lineages where an *enangan* tied the *tāli*, the Asān (military leader and, in modern times, schoolmaster) of the village must be present to give permission, and was paid money and foodstuffs by the woman's *kāranavan*. Similarly, in a Walluvanād village I visited, the *tāli* was tied in the presence of the *desavari*, who received gifts for his consent. N. Subramania Aiyar, quoted by Thurston &

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

with any Nambūdiri Brahman who had the consent of her *kāranavan*. Until recently, polyandry and divorce were said by my Nayar informants to have been even commoner than among Nayars.

In the Zamorin's and the Walluvanād lineages the *tāli* was tied by princes of the more ancient royal lineages of Kodungalur and Beypore. Actual defloration does not seem to have been obligatory in recent times. Kerr's (1811, ch 6) translation of Castaneda, however, states that

> . . . these sisters of the Zamorin, and other kings of Malabar, have handsome allowances to live upon; and, when any of them reaches the age of ten, their kindred send for a young man of the Nayar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin; after which he hangs a jewel around her neck, which she wears all the rest of her life as a token that she is now at liberty to dispose of herself to anyone she pleases as long as she lives.

Of the Zamorin's own marriage to a Nayar wife, Hamilton (1727, p. 172), a Scottish trader, wrote in 1723:

> When the Zamorin marries, he must not cohabit with his bride till the Nambourie or chief Priest has enjoyed her, and, if he pleases, may have Three Nights of her Company, because the first Fruits of her nuptials must be an holy Oblation to the God she worships; and some of the nobles are so complaisant as to allow the Clergy the same Tribute; but the common people cannot have that Compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the Priest's place themselves.

Barbosa (Stanley, 1866, p. 124), writing in a more robust age, 1510, says of the Nayar commoners: 'And from that time forward [i.e. after the *tāli*-rite] the mother goes begging some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women.'

The immediate significance of the *tāli*-rite for Nayars of this area, taken in conjunction with their combined polyandry and polygyny, is clear. A Nayar *tarawād* is perpetuated by its women. Hence the extraordinary value set by Nayars on obtaining a sufficiency of husbands and thus of children for their lineage. The *tāli*-rite dramatizes this need of the lineage for male sexual partners who ('like breeding bulls', as a Calicut prince remarked) will fulfil the one role denied to men of the lineage in respect of their sisters and nieces. The bridegroom's role as *enangan* was significant in a caste community in which sex relations were promiscuous. In this rite, through a chosen representative, the local caste group as a whole 'married' the lineage as a whole, and ritually set free the procreative powers of its girls to perpetuate their lineage. The ritual 'divorce' on the fourth day freed the girls from their particular bridegrooms, as the fee which accompanied it freed their lineage from further obligations to these men. If he wished to perpetuate the relationship, the ritual bridegroom must come again in a different role, without prior claims, merely as one of a series of lovers. The 'divorce' foreshadows the jealousy with which Nayar men regard the post-puberty lovers of their sisters: these are prevented from interfering in household matters, and may be dismissed by the brothers in a momentary fit of pique. The separation of the *tāli*-rite (the ritual marriage) from the later *sambandham* unions (initiated without rites) thus underlines the necessity to the lineage of husbands and fathers, while denying to the individual husband and father a legally and socially significant role in relation to his wife and children.

The tying of the *tāli*, in aristocratic lineages, by a Nambūdiri Brahman or other personage of higher caste in place of an *enangan*, fits in with the custom of hypergamous marriage. The higher caste bridegroom's role gives ceremonial recognition to the overlordship of *nāduvāris* over *desavāris*, of kings over *nāduvāris*, and in religious matters, of Nambūdiri Brahmans over all. The higher caste lover had no more rights in his mistress than the Nayar and even fewer obligations to her. At the same time the function in the political and economic systems of these high caste men's roles as ritual and physiological husbands and fathers to members of the castes below them must not be underestimated. Today the old political system has

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

collapsed and the old system of differential land-rights between Nambûdiris and rulers on the one hand and their Nayar tenants on the other has been seriously undermined. Yet even today Nayars remark with pride that their lineage has 'fathers' in the lineages of their former landlords and chiefs, while chiefs and royalty alike revere their Nambûdiri *genitors*, and boast that the blood of these Gods of the earth is running in their veins.

Part II. The Nayar *Tali*-Rite in North Malabar

North Malabar lies north of the Kora River, being the old kingdoms of Kolattiri, Kurumbrattiri, and Kadattunad. Except for the coast-towns expanded by Europeans, it is sparsely populated and mountainous; part of it is forest. Villages lie separated by hill ranges, usually as clusters of houses on the hillsides surrounding small wet paddy-flats in the valleys. This contrasts with South Malabar and Cochin, where the coastal plain is wider, paddy-land extensive, and settlement usually continuous between villages.

Perhaps because of its difficult environment, North Malabar did not before 1792 approach the degree of political centralization achieved in the central area. The Kolattiri Rajas, it is true, temporarily conquered Kottayam, Kurumbranad, and Kadattunad, but the area was never consolidated as was the Zamorin's kingdom. Within the small kingdoms, *nâduvaris* fought each other and rebelled against their Rajas, allying themselves with different rulers as suited their needs of the moment. Neighbouring *desavaris* sometimes fought each other within the *nâd*, while within the *desam*, *kudipaga* (lineage-feud) persisted till modern times.

Consistent with this lack of political centralization, high-class Nayars were not divided into sub-castes with administrative and occupational functions. Instead they had exogamous clans, dispersed between many villages. In Kottayam and Kolattunad the bulk of Nayars were Nambiars, independent land-owners owing only nominal allegiance to a chief. *Desavaris*, appointed by the Raja or the *nâduvari*, had administrative powers in their villages but belonged to the same sub-caste as other Nambiars. In most villages the land was divided between the Nayar property-groups as owners, Nayar tenancies being less common than in the south. *Nâduvari* lineages, however, usually owned the land in the whole village where they lived, employed Nambiar tenants as retainers, and claimed superior caste-rank, calling themselves Samantan Nambiars. Nambûdiri Brahmans are fewer in the north than in the south, especially since the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760s, when many fled to Travancore. Those who remain live as landlords in widely separated villages, with local Nambiar lineages as retainers. The Nayar servant castes are spatially distributed as in the south. The lower polluting castes of manual workers are present in similar proportions, but Tiyyars and their washermen and barbers are matrilineal in North Malabar, patrilineal in the south.

The Nayar Kinship System. North Malabar Nayars, though trained in arms in the private gymnasia of their lineages, were not recruited as a permanent militia of the kingdom. Instead they cultivated their own lands with the aid of Tiyyar tenants, the serf castes being absent over most of the area. It seems largely because of this difference of occupation, North Malabar Nayars are virilocal: a wife moves on marriage to the ancestral house of her husband, and remains with him with rare exceptions till his death. Her children are brought up by their father and commonly return to their own lineage at puberty. A boy then begins to manage his *taravâd* property under the direction of his *kâranavan*, while a girl is shortly afterwards married, from the lineage house, by common consent of her *kâranavan* and her father, often to the *kâranavan*'s son or to a maternal nephew of the father.

Divorce is permitted, but is rarer than in the south. Polygyny is rare, polyandry even traditionally forbidden. A cuckolded husband formerly cut off the hair of his wife and returned her to her lineage. The *genitor* has customary rights in and obligations to his children. In

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Tiyyar
[North Malabar]

Polyandry is forbidden

polygyny more common than among Nayars. Symmetrical cross-cousin marriage is encouraged, the mother's brother's son being the rightful husband of a girl. Divorce, however, appears to be much more common than among Nayars and the domestic group less stable, especially in poor families.

For the post-puberty marriage ceremony the bridegroom comes with his parents and elders to the house of the bride. This contrasts with Nayar marriage, where the youth is accompanied by age-mates, the father and maternal uncles being prohibited from attending. This difference reflects the fact that despite virilocal residence and the comparative infrequency of divorce, North Malabar Nayar marriage is theoretically, as in the south, a contract between individuals as sexual partners and not between lineages. Moreover, the absence of the maternal uncles reflects the sexual jealousy between proximal generations in a Nayar lineage. Among Tiyyars, marriage is primarily a contract between families, a domestic arrangement for procuring food and bringing up children, as well as a sexual tie. The bridegroom's father and *kāranavan* jointly give gold to the goldsmith who makes earrings for the bride and places them in the tops of her ears. These rings are the mark of a married woman and are removed at divorce or death.

The feast at the bride's house is paid for jointly by the two parties. After it is over, the bridegroom's *kāranavan* pays a bride-price in *panams* (old-fashioned Malayali coins) to the *kāranavan* of the bride. This sum is called *kānam*, the word used for the sum paid by a Nayar or Tiyyar tenant to his landlord at the start of a period of tenure, nowadays fixed at twelve years. The interest on the *kānam* sum is then set off against the annual rent, and returned to the tenant if the property is returned at the end of the stipulated period. The Tiyyar marriage is thus, as Aiyappan (1944, p. 91) says, 'in theory a temporary depositing of a girl by her natural guardian amidst another group from whom a security is received and also an undertaking to take care of her'. The bride's party in return pay a dowry of jewellery and vessels. The bridegroom presents one loin-cloth to the bride and another to her mother. The couple are blessed by elders and depart to the bridegroom's house.

The Tiyyar marriage, therefore, is better defined legally than the Nayar. The *kānam* sum (which is of nominal value, in Kottayam fixed at 13½ *panams* or 3 to 5 rupees[1] and paid in the old coins long after their use as currency died out) is, it seems, a symbolic purchase of the husband's *ius in uxorem*. While this persists, he must maintain his wife. Should he lose it by the wife's adultery, his *kānam* sum is returned and his wife goes home with her dowry. In theory, he does not acquire *ius in genitricem* in his wife: this, as in all matrilineal societies, remains with her natal kin. Similarly, the father need not by law maintain his children, though he often does so in fact. These may at any time be returned to their *kāranavan*.

The Tiyyar Tāli-Rite. Since the Tiyyar *tāli*-rite died out about twenty years ago, it has been better described in previous literature than by my own informants. I therefore summarize Anantha Krishna Iyer's (1909–12, I, p. 288), Thurston & Rangachari's (1909, VII, pp. 77–9) and Aiyappan's (1944, pp. 159–62) accounts, and then add that of my informants.

The rite must be performed before puberty, on pain of disgrace to the girl's family, and, in ancient times, excommunication from caste. The day was fixed by the astrologer and the ceremony held in the girl's matrilineal ancestral house. The girl was taken to the middle room of the house and secluded for three days as if she had menstruated. Like a menstruous woman, she must abstain from meat and condiments and must not see a tree, a plant, a man, a crow, a dog, or a cat. On the fourth day she bathed in the local pool. At the pool, her brother planted an arrow with its point up, to drive away evil spirits. After bathing, the girl cut a

[1] Thurston & Rangachari report that the north Malabar *kānam* sum is 42 *panams*; Aiyappan, however, places it between 8 and 20 *panams*. In Kottayam the bridegroom's mother's brother gives 13½ *panams* to the bride's mother's brother and 9 *panams* to her mother's brother's wife.

613 must be unrelated: if a man married an *enangar* woman, the *enangar* bond was broken and each lineage must find new, unrelated *enangar*. *Enangar* must be present to witness marriages, [769] to help at funerals, and to represent their lineage's ancestral spirits in the ceremonial food-[765] offerings to spirits on the sixteenth day after, or the anniversary of, a death. The prohibition on marriages between *enangar* acts as an insurance that the *enangar* should not be prejudiced by ties of matrilateral or affinal kinship in their task of bringing to justice members of the linked lineage who offended against caste law. Among Nayars, this was less likely to happen because patrilateral ties were less strong than are matrilateral ties among Tiyyars.

614 Cutting across their lineage-grouping, the Tiyyars had dispersed, exogamous matri-613 lineal clans, comparable with the clans of the north. My informants knew nothing about these clans except that they were once exogamous. They are not so today, since some people do 582 not remember their clan-names. Though the clans have died out, marriage is prohibited between known matrilineal kin.

The Tiyyars of this area had fraternal polyandry. In this they must be distinguished 595 from the Nayars, since the Tiyyars banned non-fraternal polyandry, while the Nayars of 585 Malabar and Cochin forbade the marriage of one woman to two men of the same lineage, not to mention the same sibling-group. Tiyyar fraternal polyandry died out about twenty years ago. To carry out this marriage, the horoscopes of the girl and the eldest potential husband were compared and the amount of the dowry of jewels and vessels fixed. The bride-grooms went to the girl's house with their kin and *enangar*. Their mother's brother handed clothing for the bride, together with the *kānam* sum as in Norther Malabar, to the mother's [533] brother of the bride. A learned man sang a marriage formula to the effect that the girl of such a lineage was here given to the men of such a lineage, with caste-men and the sacred lamp as witness. He adjured the bridegroom's party to punish her reasonably when necessary, but to 'Keep her well, but if you are displeased with her, bring her back to us even if she has ten children, and we shall have her back, after settling the accounts in the presence of the third man [the go-between in marriage arrangements] and the *enangan*.' The bride was seated in the marriage hall at the end of a row beside her bridegrooms. The bridegroom's mother and other kinsfolk, and finally their *enangan* and his wife, fed the grooms and then the bride with porridge and with coconut-milk.

[606] The marriage was consummated shortly afterwards in the bride's house, where each husband in order of age went to live with her for one or two weeks. At the end of the honey-moon period she was brought permanently to the husband's house, where she became her mother-in-law's subordinate. The husbands cohabited with her for equal periods in turn by the arrangement of their mother. Even a child might be married to the common wife by the 595 milk-tie, and when he grew up claim conjugal rights in his much older wife. If the family were [601] large and the wife weak in health, a second and even a third woman might, at least in modern [428] times, be married by all the brothers and shared as their common wife. Children called all the fathers *appan*, prefacing distinguishing terms. Sons had equal rights of inheritance. The system mitigated against division of property, but, at least in modern times, if the family became large, brothers might, on the death of their fathers, divide the property and the children and each take one of the wives to live with him in middle life.

586 Divorce is permitted: a divorced wife returns to her brother's house, whence she may in theory be remarried. To effect a divorce, the eldest husband traditionally took a piece of thread from his loin-cloth, burnt it in two, and blew the two pieces away, saying to the brother of the girl, 'Here is your sister's *ächdram*.' *Achdram* commonly means 'custom', and Aiyappan (1944, p. 184), interprets the phrase, 'Hereby the "thread-tie" [formed by presenting a loin-cloth to the wife at marriage] is snapped, and with it my customary rights over this woman as her husband terminate.' The earnest money was returned to the husband's kin in the

[South Malabar and Cochin]

presence of *mangar*. The young children of a divorced woman might return with her to her brother's house, but had the right to go back before puberty to their fathers' house.

In this system the husbands obtain both sexual and procreative rights in their wife, her children becoming members of their patrilineal group. The wife herself does not, however, as among Brahmans, become wholly incorporated as a member of her husband's lineage. A sonless widow whose husband left no brothers had no rights to property or maintenance by his family; she must return to her brother's house. She could not, as among Brahmans, adopt on behalf of her husband or temporarily manage his property in the absence of adult kinsmen. Though her children belong to the husband's group, the wife appears as in North Malabar to be only temporarily 'leased' by the husbands, on payments of the *kāsam* sum, for her sexual and domestic services.

Moreover, though a woman cannot inherit property in her natal *taravād*, the bond between brother and sister remains strong. The eldest brother is early regarded as the guardian of his sisters, who observe partial avoidance and respect to him much as in a Nayar *taravād*. It is significant that at divorce, a woman is returned to her brother, not to her father or the headman of her patrilineal group. At the death of a married woman, her brothers and their children observe pollution in their own dwelling-group, assembling at the deceased's conjugal house on the sixteenth day for final rites to the spirit. At the death of a man, his sisters' sons have pollution, assemble at his house, and in the sixteen days of mourning perform offerings to the spirit immediately after the deceased's sons, and before his younger brothers and paternal grandchildren. At the death of a man, his sisters and daughters make offerings to an image of the deceased on the fourteenth day, but the widow herself (unlike the Brahman widow) takes no part in death rites. This shows the strong tie persisting between a married woman and her natal group, and the comparative lack of integration into the group of the women who marry its men. The former existence of exogamous matrilineal clans underlines this persistence of the bond between women and their natal kinsfolk, especially their brothers.[1]

The Tiyyar Tāli-*Rite*. A girl's *tāli* was tied before puberty by a boy, usually a small child, of some local *taravād*, affinal or unrelated, into which the girl might marry. My informants in Cochin and Walluvanād could not remember the details of the rite, which has died out in the last twenty years. They knew that it must be done before puberty, and that the *tāli*-tier sometimes married the girl after puberty by the usual ceremonies.

According to Thurston & Rangachari (1909, VII, pp. 80–1), who describe the rite in Chavakkad, between Calicut and Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, I, pp. 285–7) who describes it for Cochin, and Aiyappan (1944, pp. 159–60) for the whole central area, the horoscopes were compared as for a marriage. The artisans provided an arrow and a brass mirror which the girl carried in her hand, a plank of the milk-tree, the rouge-bottle which figures in the eight auspicious objects, and a staff carried by the bridegroom. The local *Pānan* (a low caste of sorcerers and menial workers) brought a peacock-feather umbrella for the girl and a 'war umbrella' for the boy. A week in advance, the carpenter planted the south-east corner-post of the shed at an auspicious moment. For three days before the rites, the girl was secluded as if she had menstruated. On the day before the rites, she was taken to worship the sun, and was seated in the marriage-hall on a plank with a lit lamp, a vessel of water, rice, plantain-fruits, and a coconut before her. Her mother's brother's wife parted her hair and placed a gold coin on her crown, and the Tandan's wife (like the barber in North Malabar) anointed this three times with oil, here poured from a leaf of the *jak* tree. The girl took a ceremonial bath and was secluded in the house with a casket, a bell-metal mirror, and a sword on a stool beside her.

[1] The tie between sisters is also close. They and their children observe pollution for each others' deaths, and the sororate (forbidden among Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars) sometimes confirms the status of the mother's sister as a proxy mother.

586 ● 595 613 851 [589] [581] 593 613 428 586 593 765 [782] 593 588 [787] [564] [587]

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll

588

On the day fixed the couple dressed in cloths given by the girl's father, and the girl was led into the hall by her mother's brother and seated on the plank. The boy was carried in on the shoulders of his mother's brother, borne thrice round and seated to the right of her, her own mother's brother's wife sitting on her left. The girl's father three times asked the astrologer if the auspicious moment had come, after which the bridegroom tied the *tāli*. Aiyappan states that the boy placed the *tāli* round the girl's neck, where it was tied behind by her mother or her father's sister. Iyer reports that in Cochin, the boy stood behind the girl and tied it himself. The couple were given a sweet drink as at a normal marriage. The girl was then secluded for three days with the new loin-cloth which the boy had worn kept always beside her. On the fourth morning, the couple bathed together and were taken to worship at the temple. In South Malabar, though not in Cochin, the loin-cloth was then taken from the girl's room and cut in two, as at the divorce in a Nayar rite. The bridegroom then took a thread of it and, as at a normal divorce, snapped it saying to the girl's brother, 'Here is your sister's *āchāram*.' He departed taking the two pieces of cloth and a few rupees paid by the girl's family. As among Nayars, a whole *taravād* might hold the ceremonies for all its immature girls, separate bridegrooms then being required for each.

184 588 613

This ceremony, more clearly than the North Malabar Tiyyar one, is a mock-marriage of the girl to a vicarious husband. It would be less appropriate for the mother's brother's wife or the father's sister to tie the *tāli* in this group, since cross-cousin marriage, though preferential, is not enjoined to the extent which it is in the north. Even so, the mother's brother's wife, perhaps as potential mother-in-law, performs preliminary rites. On the face of things, however, it seems extraordinary that in this group where the marriage bond is strong, fatherhood known within a group of brothers, inheritance patrilineal, and the wife at least partly incorporated into the lineage of her husband, such a rite should be performed at all. It is significant that the Tiyyar *tāli*-tier does not take over the role of ritual father to the woman's children by her later husbands, nor does he in any sense remain a husband to the woman. Unless she is married to him after puberty, neither the girl nor her children observe pollution for his death nor use kinship terms for him. This difference between South Malabar Tiyyars and Nayars befits the difference between Nayar matriliny with its denial of the social aspect of physiological paternity, and the Tiyyar patrilineal lineage system with its emphasis on the legitimacy of children. But why did the Tiyyars perform the rite at all? Since they themselves have no answer to this question, except that it was part of ancient custom, we are driven to look for an explanation in terms of unconscious motivations.

184 588 589a

165 180 613

Part V. Interpretation of the *Tāli*-Rite

184 588 831

The ceremonies vary in detail but have certain features in common (see Chart I). The rite must in all cases be performed before puberty, and is always a symbolic defloration. This is most clear in the royal lineages, where the bridegroom actually deflowers the girl. Among South Malabar Nayars, the aggressive approach of the bridegroom's party suggests a sexual attack, as does the action of the bridegroom who places his sword across his lap before tying the *tāli* on the bride. When, on the fourth morning, the bridegrooms force open the shut doors of the girls' lineage house, it is clear that they are, as strangers, making an aggressive entry into the *taravād*, i.e. symbolically deflowering its women.

In all the ceremonies other ritual acts make it clear that the rite is a symbolic defloration. The lit wick, arrow, sword, coconut tree, staff, sun, sky, peacock-feathers, the corner-post of the marriage-shed and the bamboo rod stuck in a coconut are readily recognized as phallic symbols recurrent in South Indian ritual; while paddy, rice, coconut inflorescence, rouge-bottle, bell-metal mirror (worshipped in temples as symbol of Bhagavadi), mud pot of water,

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

000 [262] [783] [804]

sexual jealousy of the natal kinsmen (projected on to spirits, gods, and ancestors) aroused by a woman's marital sexuality. The prohibitions on eating meat and condiments are those stipulated for both men and women in all periods of pollution and also in periods of abstention to obtain ritual purity before worshipping a god. Since these foods are believed to induce sexual desire, this prohibition is equated by informants with abstention from sexual intercourse (also enjoined in all periods of pollution or of enhanced ritual purity) and thus is comparable here to the prohibition on seeing a man or other male sexual symbol and of refraining from marital intercourse.

The practice of a girl's arming herself with a knife or an arrow during menstruation may signify an unconscious desire on the part of women to appropriate and arm themselves with the penis of the prohibited parent, or with any phallic symbol, and thus obviate the dreaded incestuous attack. Since the dread is also unconsciously a desire, this hypothesis is not incompatible with the other, that the knife and arrow are phallic symbols (perhaps paternal) with which the girl, by keeping them beside her, symbolically cohabits in the seclusion period.

On the side of men, the planting of an arrow by the girl's brother near the bathing pool after her first menstruation may be a sign of the brother's unconscious desire to copulate with his sister, or to drive away unwanted parental figures (the mother's brother or the father) whose sexual attack the *girl both dreads and unconsciously desires. The same incestuous* desire on the part of the brother appears in a South Malabar Nayar rite at the first menstruation, where the brother breaks a sheath containing coconut buds with his knife and counts the buds which roll out as an augur of the number of children his sister will bear.

It seems probable that in general the menstruous woman is unconsciously equated by a man with his mother as a forbidden sexual object; hence the fear of approaching her, based on unconscious fear of castration by the father. This view finds support in the beliefs that a man becomes impotent if he copulates with a menstruous woman, and that, by extension, trees and plants wither and die if she urinates or walks upon them. As is well known, the fear of impotence frequently indicates an unconscious fear of being castrated by the father for a sexual approach to the mother. The particular fear of the menstruous woman may lead back to an infantile belief, common in our own society, that parental intercourse is a sadistic attack by the father in which the mother is wounded and bleeds. The fact that the menstruous woman is armed with a knife or an arrow recalls an allied phantasy common among European infants, of the phallic mother who by intercourse has possessed herself of the father's penis and is thus doubly terrifying since, if one approached her, the penis would attack (castrate) oneself. (Klein 1932, pp. 103, 189–90.)

Why is it deemed necessary for a girl to 'menstruate' and be deflowered (both symbolically) before she has attained puberty and is likely to enter into real sex relations? The first part of my hypothesis is that this rite issues out of the marked horror of incest in these castes, which makes it necessary for the natal kinsmen of a woman to renounce the rights in her mature sexuality before she is in fact mature.

184 613 564 602 [586]

Among the Nayars and North Malabar Tiyyars descent is matrilineal and the *ius in genitricem* of a woman remains with her matrilineage headed by her *kāranavan*. This man is usually her mother's brother and later her own elder brother. In all these castes but particularly among South Malabar Nayars, a woman must implicitly obey these kinsmen, sometimes to the extent of divorcing her husband of whom they are overtly jealous. The horror with which these castes regard incest within the lineage, however, makes the etiquette of behaviour between a woman and older men of her lineage formalized to the point of avoidance. She may not sit before them, speak to them except under necessity, nor be alone with one of them. In the royal lineages a prince should not see his mature younger sisters and maternal nieces except on ceremonial occasions.

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar
Tiyyar

between mother and son was the most cherished relationship, while that between brother and sister came second in emotional strength. In all the exogamy of the unilineal group was sternly enjoined, and there was horror of adelphic incest. There was, however, evidently temptation towards it, since women remained under the partial guardianship of their brothers and might (invariably among South Malabar Nayars, occasionally in the other groups) live in the same house with them.

It is a commonplace in Hinduism that a woman is never independent: throughout her life she is under the guardianship of one or more men. At her birth all rights in a woman are vested in the men of her property-group, among Nayars and Tiyyars the *kāranavan* and under him other males of the group, whether matrilineal or patrilineal. These rights include the right to discipline her and, as she becomes old enough, to command her domestic services; they are counterbalanced by the obligation to feed her and protect her from harm. At puberty two new sets of rights are acquired by whoever is her guardian, in her sexuality and in the children she may bear. In the matrilineal castes the *ius in genitricem* is retained by the matrilineal kinsmen. Among South Malabar Tiyyars it is given to a group of brothers of another patrilineal lineage at the post-puberty marriage rite. In all these castes there is, however, uncertainty about the *ius in uxorem*, since the girl is not, as in a patrilineal Tamil caste, given over to the guardianship of one particular husband for the duration of her life. First, all the castes permit divorce and reversion to the brothers' house. Second, among Nayars, though a woman might have several husbands traditionally, she might conceivably have none, if she was divorced or failed to compete with other women. Among South Malabar Tiyyars, because of fraternal polyandry, many women must have remained unmarried. The *tāli*-rite, therefore, appears in one aspect as half a marriage, a ceremony made necessary by the strong incest-taboos in these groups and the uncertain nature of post-puberty marriage. In it the men of her natal group ceremonially give away the sexual rights in a girl. That the bridegroom does not receive permanent rights in his bride, but forsakes her on the fourth morning, points up the negative character of this marriage, as a renunciation of rights by the men of one group without the corresponding acceptance of them by members of another.

In all the groups certain ritual acts emphasize this reluctant renunciation by the woman's natal kinsmen. In the matrilineal castes one of her brothers, or her *kāranavan*, carries each girl into the marriage shed, bears her round, and seats her on the plank. This act is significant because after the *tāli*-rite a girl may not be touched by mature men of her lineage: taboos associated with incest prohibitions come into force from this date. Among South Malabar Tiyyars, again, the mother's brother, who after the father has secondary rights of guardianship and who, through matrilineal clan exogamy, is also concerned in the etiquette of incest-taboos, carries the girl to her seat. In the matrilineal castes, the girl's *kāranavan* asks the astrologer if the auspicious time has come, and signals for the *tāli* to be tied. Among South Malabar Tiyyars, as might be expected, the father officiates here. Among South Malabar Nayars, brothers of the girls first welcome the bridegrooms, wash their feet, and receive gifts of clothing in return. The underlying sexual hostility of the lineage's men to these necessary intruders appears on the fourth morning, when boys of the host lineage pelt the bridegrooms with plantain-fruits (recognized as phallic symbols by Nayars) as they enter the house to eat the ceremonial meal with their brides. Among Nayars and South Malabar Tiyyars, the *kāranavan*'s gifts to the bridegrooms when they depart after the 'divorce' signify his gratitude for their act of ceremonially releasing the procreative powers of his lineage's women, while at the same time dismissing them.

We note now that the *tāli* is seldom tied by the man with whom the girl will later cohabit as her husband. Among South Malabar Nayars the *enangan* might, after the 'divorce', approach her again as lover. But his status as ritual bridegroom gave him no prior claims: as the girl's

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWII Kerala AWII Nayar

for young men to go and stay in their wives' houses and visit their own families for business arrangements.

Authority in the family is wielded by the eldest member, who is called *kārnavan*. He has full control of the common property, and manages the income very much as he pleases. He arranges marriages (*sambandhams*) for the boys as well as the girls of the family. He had till lately full power (at least in practice) of alienating anything that belonged to them. His will was undisputed law. This is, perhaps, what is intended to be conveyed by the term *Matri-potestas* in communities of female descent. But it should be remembered that among the Nāyars the autocrat of the family is not the mother, but the mother's brother.

The power of the *Kārnavan* over the family property has always been, in theory, limited, because the property was supposed to belong to every member of the family jointly. Till lately, however, it was practically impossible to limit the *Kārnavan's* power of mortgaging or even fully alienating it, because when it came to litigation the *Kārnavan* always pleaded that such action as he took was necessary for the welfare of the family, and justified himself by basing his arguments "on the discretionary power" vested in him. However, the old theory has lately been asserted in law that a *Kārnavan* can sell or mortgage the property only with the consent of the other members of the family.

All the moneys owing to the family can be paid only through him. He alone can give permission for the use of what belongs to the family. He can punish all the members of the family, either by depriving them temporarily of their allowance, or by prohibiting them to enter the house. In short, he is virtually the head of a tribe rather than the senior member of a family.

The Wife of the Kārnavan.—The wife of the *Kārnavan* has no standing in the family; yet as is but natural, she is supposed to be a dark and sinister force working against the interests of the *Tharawad*. Since she does not belong to the *Tharawad* of her husband she has no interest in its well-being, and it is generally supposed that the *Ammāri* (the wife of the maternal uncle) is interested only in getting as much out of her husband's family for her own children as her influence over her husband allows. All the tales told to children have as the villain the *Ammāvi*, whose position is not only that of the wife of the maternal uncle, but also the mother-in-law of the brother. She is universally considered to be a sort of sinister step-mother.

But it must be acknowledged that the Nāyar *Kārnavan* loves his sister's children more than his own. The explanation of this apparently unnatural feeling lies in two directions. First, the father is not necessarily of the same caste as the son. Secondly, there is always the possibility of a break in the union. Divorce is not a matter of any difficulty among the Nāyars, both the husband and wife having equal right to announce such a termination of their connection whenever either of the parties desires to do so. This instability of relationship is the principal reason

8:Panikkar I-4,5 (no date) 1918 AWII Kerala AWII Nayar

why a man's affection for his own son is neither so intense nor so permanent as his affection for his sister's son.

Also, in matrilineal communities family tradition descends only through the sister's progeny. As the Nāyars formed a fighting aristocracy before the British conquest, they had naturally acquired family tradition, mottoes and arms, which descend of right only in the female line. Hence also a man looks to the training of his sister's sons to keep up his family tradition. All these contribute to an extraordinary, and at first sight inexplicable, tenderness towards the children of one's sister.

Relationship.[1]—Among the Nāyars the classificatory system of relationship is prevalent. When the ties of the family extend not only to one's immediate relations but to all who trace descent from the same ancestress in the female line, it is but natural that the terms of close relationship are used to all who belong to the family. As a matter of fact, the distinction between own brothers and collateral brothers does not exist. All the persons of your own generation older than you are called brothers, and equal respect is shown to them. They are called by such terms as big brother, small brother, etc., *only when they are older than you.* Those who are younger are always called by their names.

All women of your mother's generation are called mothers; those older than your mother are called *Peramma* or *Valiamma*, which means nominal mother or bigger mother, and those younger are called *Kochamma*, little mothers. But unlike among brothers, the distinction between one's mother and other females of the same generation is always maintained. Though respect is paid to all of them alike, own mother is always spoken of as mother, without qualification, and she alone has complete right to command you. Mother's own sisters are also different from those who are only collateral cousins to her. Mother's own brother and all of his generation are called *Ammava* (literally mother's brother). Here also the distinction between own *Ammavas* and collateral *ammavas* was very slight in Nāyar society till nearly thirty years ago. Now, however, one looks more on one's own *Ammava* as different from others, which is obviously due to the influence of the authority of direct relationship inculcated through the new system of education.[2]

The mother-in-law has no special name. This is, of course, due to the universal prevalence of first cross-cousin marriage. The mother-in-law is generally addressed

[1] Spencer and Gillen (*Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 56) try to prove that the classificatory terminology to express relationship shows the existence in some earlier time of group marriages. Perhaps it does so when such relationship terms are in use in a patrilineal community. On the other hand, in a matrilineal community such terms have nothing to do with the system of marriage, but only with relationship counted on the mother's side.

[2] Note specially: though all the women of the mother's generation stand in equal relationship, it is only the actual parent that is entitled to be called mother without any qualification to it. All the others are spoken of in comparative terms, as big mother, i.e., elder mother, small mother, i.e., younger mother.

8:Panikkar I-4, 5 (no date) 1918 AWII Kerala AWII Nayar

vocal music, etc., goes on. One by one the guests soon depart, and the bridegroom stays in his wife's house for a few days. It must be remembered that the Nāyars are a strictly matrilocal community, though the custom shows a laxity in these days.

The *Sambandham* customs are not the same all over Malabar. They vary considerably in details, but the principle is the same all over. *Sambandham* in itself, though recognised as legal, has not the binding effect of a proper marriage. It is in theory dissoluble at will, and often it happens that, due either to misunderstanding or quarrel, either of the parties breaks off relations. In such a case, the marriage is deemed to have ended, and the aggrieved party can, without further formality, marry anybody else. The legal position is slightly altered in Travancore. By the Nāyar Regulation Act of 1912 it was enacted that if a man wants to break off his marriage relations with a woman to whom he was united by a properly conducted *Sambandham* he has to give her six months' notice and provide for the maintenance of her children by him (till they attain their twelfth year, unless the mother marries in the meantime). But this law has very little influence, and marriages and divorces go on in the same free fashion as before. In British Malabar, there is the Malabar Marriage Act of Sir C. Sankaran Nayar, the present Educational Member of the Imperial Government, by which a Nāyar entering into a *Sambandham* with a Nāyar woman can, if the parties choose to do so, register their union as a marriage to which ordinary marriage laws apply. This has been found very ineffective, for in the last twenty years during which it has been in force only six marriages have been registered, and all of them have been in the family of its distinguished author.

Before such laws came to be enacted (and to a very great extent even now) there has been singular freedom of marriage and divorce among the Nāyars. The men that a girl could possibly marry were strictly restricted by certain conditions. A Nāyar girl is not allowed to contract a marriage with men of a lower subcaste. She can marry either in her own subcaste or in castes above hers. She is not allowed to marry one who is not at least two years older than herself. She cannot marry anyone who shares pollution with her (that is descended from the same ancestress on the maternal side, however remote). There are cases when the common ancestress lived nearly four hundred years ago, but still her descendants are supposed to be so closely related in blood as to preclude matrimonial relationship of any sort.

The husband visits the wife's house after dinner, and this does not cause any particular inconvenience, as, till lately, marriage was restricted to people of one's own village or of its immediate neighbourhood. But in these days the tendency is strongly patrilocal, though ancient and aristocratic families still refuse to send their ladies out of the house. To keep within one's own house is considered to be a specially aristocratic privilege.

The question of polyandry among the Nāyars is a much debated point. This can be said with certainty: there has been no authenticated case of it at least for The last fifty years.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

588 a white cloth, one over the other. His permission is solicited
622 for the performance of the ceremony, and, with his consent,
[465] the *tâli* is tied. He is paid four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two or sixty-four *puthans* (one *puthan* is equal to ten pies), according to the means of the family. He also gets some curry stuffs, betel
588 leaves, arecanuts and tobacco. There is also at the time a
574 grand distribution of *pân supâri*, scented sandal paste, jasmine
[431] flowers to the women of the village and to the wives of the relatives assembled there. Then follows the feast to the guests assembled there, for which certain formalities are observed, with regard to the seats arranged for them; any violation of the social etiquette will result in the guests abruptly leaving the dining hall without partaking of any food. The women of the family and their relatives are first served. The women of the sub-caste as well as those of the village return home after chewing betel. The men of the same sub-castes and others are
[564] next served, then others lower in status to them, and lastly come in for their share the village barber and washerman. Provision is sometimes made to feed the members of the very low castes. In the meanwhile, what is known as *Pakarcha* (cooked rice, curries, sweets, etc., for the feasts) is sent to the families of relations. It must be said that the various
[262] preparations of the feast are boiled rice, vegetable curries, *pâyasam* (rice boiled in milk) and butter milk, and the grandness of the feast is judged by the quantity of rice prepared for consumption, and other preparations are in proportion to it. The first day's ceremony and the feast thus come to an end. The ceremony however lasts for the next three days, but there is nothing of importance on the second and the third days, except some dancing and music by maidens inside the *pandal*. In some places, on the third day, the caste-men of the village are treated to a luncheon of rice and milk pudding and to varieties of amusements, such as the *Kathakali* and other performances.

588 On the fourth day, the caste-men are again invited. The
[564] married couple bathe in the neighbouring tank or river holding each other's hand, and are taken in procession to worship the deity in the village temple amidst the beating of tom-toms and merry shouts, after which the party return home. The bride-groom and the bride are taken to the kitchen, which they are
[586] prohibited from entering during the first three days, and there they dine together. After this, they proceed to the pandal where

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

the wedding dress is torn and given to the *Chithayan* which signifies the dissolution of marriage. In some places this takes place on the morning of the fifth day, and instead of this ceremoney the *táli* tier is given a fee of eight annas and is dismissed with some presents, and in others the cloth is severed into two parts and each part given to the bridegroom and the bride separately in the presence of *enangans* and other friends. Throughout South Malabar, the severing of the cloth on the fourth day is indispensable and is part of the ceremony, while, in this State, it is said that the custom is not now in vogue. The marriage badge is not removed soon after the divorce, but is worn by the girl till the twenty-eighth day. Some remove it on the fourth or the fifth day, while others wear it for a week.

In poor families, where this ceremony cannot be performed on a large scale, the girls are taken to the nearest temple, and the *táli* is tied by the mother with neither feasting nor merriment. In some cases very poor people take their girls before the deity in the *Trikkákkarappan* temple and tie the *táli*, and very often do such people perform the ceremony on the *Onam* day in front of the clay image (*Mahádévar*) placed in their court-yard.

Where the Thirumulpád is the *táli* tier, he goes through the ceremony for a number of girls, and on receipt of the fee for his service to each girl, he departs in peace. If the *táli* tier, whether a Kshatriya or a young man of the *enangu*, wishes to take her as his wife, he is at liberty to do so with the consent of her parents; and in that case he has to celebrate the *sambandham* by giving her presents of cloth.

In South Malabar and the Cochin State, the general belief among the Nayars is, that the bridegroom has a right to marry her if he wills, and the severing of the cloth shows the dissolution of the marriage tie, which gives her the liberty to choose anybody else as her husband. It is also understood that, with the tying of the *táli*, the virginity ceases, and he who brings or takes her to that stage has a right to cohabit with her, which he relinquishes on the fourth day of the *Tálikettu kalyánam*. Further, the woman observes a sort of pollution for fifteen days for the death of the man who tied the *tali*, which proves that he is her husband. In some parts she merely bathes, and even this has been of late given up.

The following is given to be the explanation of the ceremonial:—There is very little difference between the *Tálikettu*

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

585
184 six months," and a reply is given in the terms "Be it so". Thus, the permission of the senior lady of the bride's family is asked and given to the bridegroom to visit the bride for a period of six months.

[554] The young men of some aristocratic families who wish to perform *sambandham* have the brides brought to them on an auspicious day without any formal ceremony, and henceforth look upon them as their wives.

585 The union is generally effected with the mutual consent,
[586] but is terminable at the will of either party. Practically, a
[581] marriage thus effected is, in the majority of instances, found as happy and enduring as others more formal and ceremonial.

The following is the account given by the late Mr. Chandu Menon of the ceremonies constituting the marriage among the Nayars of Malabar. It is quoted here, because it is a typical description which covers all forms of the union :—

585 "*Sambandham* is the principal Malayalam word as *viváham*
192 is in Sanskrit. Whatever may be the *sambandhams* of the
197 *marumakkathâyam* Nayars, there can be no doubt that the idea which the word conveys to a Malayali is the same as the word *vivâham*. The generic term, *sambandham*, which, in South Malabar between Calicut and Nedunganad, and in Ponnani, Cochin, and parts of Travancore, is the old name to denote marriage includes—

1. *Guna dósham* as used in South and North Malabar.

2. *Pudamuri* or its Sanskrit synonym for *Vastradánam* used in South Malabar.

3. *Uzhamporukkuka*, and *Vidâram Kairuga* of North Malabar.

4. The *Kidakkóra kalyânam* of Palghat and parts of Nedunganád.

Pudamuri, *Vastradánam*, *Uzhamporukkuka*, *Vidâram Kiaruga* are local expressions hardly understood beyond the localities in which they are used, but there would hardly be a Malayali who would not really understand what is meant by *sambandham thudanguka* (to begin *sambandham*). The meaning of this phrase which means "to marry" is understood throughout the Keralam in the same way, and there cannot be
585 any ambiguity about it.

It is thus found, that *sambandham* is the principal word
184 denoting marriage among the *marumakkathâyam* Nayars. It

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

585
nuts, which are also given to all the persons assembled at the 184
place. After the departure of the guests, the bridegroom re- [431]
tires to the bed room with the bride.

This is an unvarnished account of a *Pudamuri*. Next morning *veetil kettu* or *salkàram* ceremony follows, and the relations of the bridegroom take the bride to the husband's house, where the bride's party are treated to a grand feast ".[1]

The orthodox view of this form of marriage.

The *sambandham* or *Pudamuri* ceremony is not a mar- 585
riage in the legal or sacramental sense of the 564
term. The views of the members of the 184
orthodox community in Malabar, who are the expounders of the existing customs, are of great ethnographic importance. It is said that the Nambuthiris consort with Nayar females by *sambandham*, and precisely the same ceremony is gone through whether the husband is a Nambuthiri or a Nayar. The Nambuthiris do not look upon it as a marriage. Where a Brahman is a bridegroom, he cannot eat with his Sudra wife, and is therefore unable to join with his wife in the wedding feast. There is no comparison of horoscopes. The [831]
aristocracy of the District of Malabar, the Rajas who are admittedly the heads of the Nayar caste, and the Nambuthiris who are the expounders of religion, opine, that chastity is not one of the duties prescribed for the Nayar community and *slokas* (verses) are quoted to prove this. This view is not held in the Cochin State.

In the Malabar Marriage Commission, one hundred and 586 ●
ninety-seven witnesses admitted the undoubted fact that either party to the union may terminate it at any time from wantonness, caprice or any other reason, and that if the couple joined together by *Pudamuri* were satisfied with one night of hymeneal bliss, there is no legal impediment to prevent their separating without any formality on the following morning. Ninety-one witnesses alleged some formality to be necessary, and that parties should not separate without the approval of their *kdranavans* or of their relatives or of their caste people. There was also a small minority (twenty-one witnesses) who [562]
denied to the women the right of divorce which they accorded to man, assigning as their reason, that, under the Hindu Law, no woman can be independent. This minority would deprive

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 35-37.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

562 *marumakkathdyam* of its one great merit, *viz.*, that in sexual matters it places the man and the woman on terms of equality [851] giving equal freedom to both. With practical unanimity, the witnesses admitted that the man may turn away the woman, and that under the *marumakkathdyam* law, he is in no way responsible for the maintenance of the children whom he has begotten upon her. Further, the person that begot a child in a *marumakkathdyam* female was originally regarded as a casual visitor and the sexual relation depended for his continuance on mutual consent.[1]

585 556 564 581 The views expressed above are those of the landed aristocracy, and the rulers who were admittedly of the Nayar caste, as also those of the somewhat selfish class of the Nambuthiris, of Malabar, who, to gratify their selfish ends, quote chapter and verse of their own creation in support of the existing custom and teachings, which the Nayars of these days will never submit to. All or nearly all of them cling to one wife for life, and with them *sambandham* is the real marriage, *de facto* and *de jure*. This is the real state of affairs in the States of Cochin and Travancore as well as in British Malabar.

581 The present and growing tendency in all cases, in which, a man, whether a Nambuthiri or a Nayar, consorts with a Nayar woman, is to look upon her as the true wife, and the children of such unions are looked upon as theirs and duly provided for, so far as their means permit. The statement is to a certain extent confirmed by Mr. Logan, who was the Collector of Malabar for many years and thus had ample opportunities of knowing a great deal of Malabar and its people. He says, "this part of Malabar has, in the hands of unenquiring commentators, brought much undeserved obloquy on the morality of the people. The fact, at any rate, of recent years, is that, although the theory of the law sanctions freedom in these relations, conjugal fidelity is very general. Nowhere is the marriage tie, albeit, informal, more rigidly observed or respected, nowhere is it more jealously guarded or its neglect more savagely avenged. Their very looseness of the law makes the individual observances closer, for people have been watchful over the things they are most liable to lose. The absence of a ceremonial has encouraged the popular impression, but a ceremonial,

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 38 to 44.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

595 [554] circumstances of his matrimonial life. If however he do so, his family and society will not recognise it as such, and no woman of any respectability will enter into such an alliance.

● 586 According to the customary rules of *sambandham*, the relationship between husband and wife, ceases at the will and pleasure of either party; but in practice, such dissolution of marriage is of rare occurrence. The woman generally does not leave her husband, while the man may send her away whenever he chooses to do so. Marriage can be dissolved only with the consent of the *kāranavans* or the other elders of the family. There are certain formalities to be observed in this connection, which vary in detail in different places, but some secret act indicating the intention of repudiation seems necessary before the divorce. In the event of the husband trying to effect a separation from his wife, he sends two or three respectable men to give intimation to the *kāranavan* of the wife's family setting forth his reason for so doing. If the wife wishes to terminate the *sambandham*, she brings it to the notice of the *kāranavan*, and with his consent tells the husband in the presence of her relatives the reasons for discarding him. In the northern parts of the State, especially in the Chittur Taluk, the prevailing custom is to send for the husband and two of the fellow caste-men and to declare the reluctance of the woman to continue as wife, in the presence of these men. In some cases, instead of the formal declaration of the dissolution of marriage, certain conduct on the part of the parties is tantamount to such a declaration, such, for instance, as the failure by the husband or his family to send the usual presents to the family of the wife for *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Thiruvāthira*, the refusal of the wife's people to accept them when sent, the failure to pay for wife's sustenance attended with deliberate omission to visit her, the deliberate absence for three consecutive nights with the consent of the elders from her husband's room. As a rule, no dissolution is allowed unless the cases for the same are enquired into and discussed by guardians and relations. Though a woman is free to marry and to dissolve the union, yet, as a rule, she never does so. The fear of social disgrace and self interest stand in the way of a woman's attempt to separate from her husband. In Cochin as well as in South Malabar, the women

Duration of conjugal union.

[613] [184] [626] [184] [582]

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

are allowed greater freedom in the choice as well as in the divorce of husbands (*sambandhakárans*), and the females in the family do not interfere in their freedom so long as it does not produce any domestic scandal. The orthodox view is that, as the woman is not independent, she seldom thinks of relinquishing the husband. Arbitrary divorce is thus discouraged, and adultery is a grave social offence. A wife, who is disputatious, who steals her husband's property, who favours another than her husband, who converses with strangers, who is gluttonous, who enters strange houses, should be put away even though she may have born ten sons. Litigation between two families and disagreement between a husband and wife are also the causes. Social stigma follows the adulterer, and the adulteress loses her status in society.

Pulikudi.

A Nayar woman has to observe certain ceremonies during her first pregnancy. First during and after the seventh month of pregnancy, she bathes and worships the deity in the temple every morning, and eats before her morning meal, a small quantity of butter, over which holy *mantrams* have been recited by the temple priest or by Nambuthiris. This is done generally till delivery. *Pulikudi* (tamarind juice drinking) is an indispensable ceremony performed for every pregnant woman, by the rich and poor alike, on an auspicious day, in the ninth month of pregnancy. An auspicious day, nay, even the very hour, is fixed by the astrologer. The ceremony opens by the planting of a twig of the *ambázha* tree (Spondias mangifera) on the morning of the day of the ceremony in the inner court-yard (*nadumittam*) or the northern wing of the house. At the appointed hour (*muhúrtam*), the pregnant woman, after having been bathed and properly attired, is conducted to the northern block of the house (*vatikkini*) where she is seated facing eastwards. The *Ammáyi* or the uncle's wife, whose presence on the occasion is essential, goes to the court-yard, and plucking a few leaves of the planted twig, squeezes a few drops of its juice into a cup. This she hands over to the brother, or uncle, if any, of the pregnant woman. It is necessary that the brother should wear a gold ring on his right hand ring-finger. Holding a country knife (*pisánkatti*) in his left hand, with its point towards the north, he pours the tamarind juice over his knife with his right hand three times

10:Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

children regard this picture of Prabaty Amma as that of their ancestress through their father. It appears from this symbol, combined with the frequent visits of their father's sisters and their children, that the father's matrilineal kin are conceptualized as if they were that of the mother. This tendency is greater in the case of the wife and children of *32*, which I think largely derives from the fact that *32* is playing the role of the central figure of the Pula Sambantham of his matrilineal group, and that his wife is a member of Mangayil *tarwad*, which is one of the important and close affinal matrilineal groups to Marayil members: the mother's brother and brother of *32*'s wife also married with members of Marayil *26* and *56*.

In spite of the inclination of these children towards their father's matrilineal group, and paternal authority being well established, they still maintain the surname of the male members of their mother's matrilineal group.[1] In Trivandrum the Nayar said to me it depended on the individual free choice whether one should take the father's surname or the mother's brother's: in fact, I found some of them taking their father's surname. However, among the Nayar in Ernaklum, all they are taking mother's brothers' surname and they are proud to do so.

The greater approach of the children to their father's matrilineal group seems to me largely due to their father's important status in his matrilineal group, the members of which live very near to him, combined with his distinguished economic activities, which make him maintain closer contact with his matrilineal kin. For example, if *32* was not the central figure in his matrilineal group, and poor, and on the other hand his wife had a very wealthy uncle to help her now and then, his wife and children might have more attachment to their mother's matrilineal kin, rather than to the father's.

In such a transitional stage, including the earlier stage of the disintegration of the *tarwad* as already discussed, a man has two orientations, to his matrilineal group and to his elementary family. And a man stands balanced between the two groups, differentiating his role according to the circumstances in which he is involved. In this situation to decide a man's behaviour the given law seems less effective than the actual situation in which an individual is involved. *36* who married and once resided in his wife's *tarwad*, later returned to his own *tarwad*, taking the role of a *karanavan* of his old *tarwad*. He said that he felt his need as a guardian for his sister's children, as there was no grown up male member in this *tarwad* building; but he did not mind leaving his wife and grown-up daughters and sons behind. This case should be compared with the case of Nando Pillai who lived his later life with his wife and children, though he was the legal guardian *(karanavan)* of his *tarwad*.

1 Among Nayars, traditionally the surname is used for only male members of a *tarwad*, while female members are called by her maiden name, adding the term "Amma" instead of the surname, after their initiation ceremony. All male members of a *tarwad* share the same surname: for example, the surname of Marayil members is Menon. However, since the same surname is used by many *tarwad* among the Nayars, it does not necessarily indicate common descent lines.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

*595
601

AIYAPPAN †

NARAYAN † ?[1]

PARAGNODEN
informant2[2]

KRISHNA
m. to
Janeki
of Odevan-
gatil t.[3]

Paru
m. to
ARMUGHAN
of Kanga-
lata t.

RAMAN	Devaki	Madevi	NARAYAN
22	20	12	10

of
atot-

all of them unmarried

BOY
irl

[1] Emigrated to Singapore, fate unknown, presumed dead.
[2] Now eighty years old
[3] 2° m. (at 43, now 55, after 15 years of first marriage) to:
Tina
of Peralli t.

KESEVAN	Lakshmi
11	9

[4] 2° m. (at 22, now 45, after 4 years of first marriage) to:
Vali, his fathers' sister's daughter (see Part 2).
[5] His fathers' sister's daughter (see Part 2).
[6] At Manjara. Now divorced; the children are with the mother because they are still very small.
[7] Velu died of "fever"; Krishna of a "stomach ache"; Kali fell into a well; Devaki died of dysentry.

●[586]
[165]

[facing P. 192-C]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

told me that they knew of no instances. They nevertheless seemed alive to such a possibility and readily gave me the above information as theoretically feasible. 597

Divorce was a stumbling block to my questioning, and I found it difficult to get a clear picture of it from the informants. That divorce does exist, there seemed to be no doubt in their minds. The woman was returned to her parents' house with what remained of her dowry, and a piece of cloth which was handed to her father and mother, if they were alive, or to her brothers if the former were dead. The intention of divorce had to be declared publicly before representatives of both the wife's and the husbands' families. The bride-price could be claimed, but this is not often done any longer. What happened if a woman wished to divorce rather than the men, was a possibility which they did not seem to be able to visualize. When I asked about it, Panju said it did not happen, and women did not take this initiative. I mentioned the case of the Pulluvan family which I had visited on the 21st of November, and in which Kalyany had not accepted the polyandrous marriage with two brothers and had eventually left them to go back home to her parents (see p. 214). But both Panju and his brother said that this was another caste, and that such things "did not happen with Thandans". 586● 586 564

Panju was surprised at the idea which I put to him that, if one of the husbands in a polyandrous household wished to break away and set up another home for himself with a woman of his choice, divorce from the common wife might be necessary. He insisted that all he had to do was to obtain the consent of his brothers, or, if he needed the help of his mother's brother to get new wife for him, this uncle's approval of his plan. This was not "divorce", he insisted, since the common wife remained in the family with the elder brother or brothers. His outlook appeared to stem, it seemed to me, from the polyandrous concept of the household constituted as such. The common wife was married to the household rather than to the individual men, and even if one of them broke away, the union between the principal and herself was not affected. There could thus be no "divorce", the term being reserved for the break-up of the latter marriage, which would be a much more serious occurrence. 595* 586

But what then of the property? If the deserting husband took a portion of it away for himself, did that not make it look more like a divorce from the wife shared in common? And what about the children? With whom did they remain in the case of a real divorce, such as we had first spoken about?

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

*595
586

Panju and my interpreters agreed that even if a seceding husband took part of the family property away to found a new home of his own, no procedure of divorce was needed from the principal part, from the holders of the remaining main section, the other husbands and the common wife. He just left with the consent of the others, and to all practical purposes was henceforward considered as separated from the common spouse, without the formalities of a public divorce. It was a detachment from the family household, agreed to by the community of husbands, and the man was free to remarry as if he had been given formal permission to do so. Nobody outside or within the kin circle could possibly object.

With regard to the fate of children involved in a regular divorce of their parents in a polyandrous household, Panju and my interpreters were prepared to reply only to questions concerning the divorce of a common wife by her husbands. The case of a woman leaving her husbands simply appeared too unreal and fantastic for them to imagine. As to the departure of one of the husbands to found another family, since there was no divorce properly speaking, the situation was plain: the children were those of the community of himself and his brothers and they therefore remained with the principal, usually with the elder brother, if all the others had decided to leave, one by one. This was the case of the family under study, Nani and Raman junior having remained with Raman senior at the death of Mayadi until Nani was married away. Krishna, Janeki, Karthiyani and Madivi stayed in the large house with the present *karanavan*, Raman senior, but then they were born after the remarriage of Sankara and the departure of Panju and Narayana. If they had been born before these events, however, the position would have been exactly the same, and they would have been left behind with Raman senior and Kuniyama; neither Sankara nor Panju and Narayana would have had any claims on them at all.

Should a woman be divorced by her husbands – a rare occurrence, both my informant and my interpreters assured me – she would be obliged to leave behind all the children whom she had had with them. The only exception to this rule would be if they were too small to be separated from their mother, who might still be suckling them. In that case she would be allowed to take them away temporarily until they were weaned, and then they would have to be returned to their fathers. They were the heirs of the household and, even if there were girls among them, they belonged to it in accordance with the *makkathayam* rule, and there could therefore be no question of them remaining with the mother.

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

595 [585] realised, the women among the Nāyars not being restricted to family or number, but, after she has been consecrated by the usual rites before the nuptial fire, in which ceremony any indifferent person may officiate as the representative of her husband, being in her intercourse with the other sex only restrained by her inclinations; provided that the male with whom she associates be of an equal or superior tribe. But it must be stated, for the glory of the female character, that, notwithstanding the latitude thus given to the Nāyattis, and that they are thus left to the guidance of their own free will and the play of their own fancy (which in other countries has not always been found the most efficient check on the conduct of either sex), it rarely happens that they cohabit with more than one person at the same
● 586 time. Whenever the existing connexion is broken, whether from incompatibility of temper, disgust, caprice, or any of the thousand vexations by which from the frailty of nature domestic happiness is liable to be disturbed, the woman seeks another lover, the man
587 another mistress. But it mostly happens that the bond of paternity is here, as elsewhere, too strong to be shaken off, and that the uninfluenced and uninterested union of love, when formed in youth, continues even in the decline of age."

595 [20] In a note on the Nāyars in the sixteenth century, Cæsar Fredericke writes as follows.* "These Nairi having their wives common amongst themselves, and when any of them goe into the house of any of these women, he leaveth his sworde and target at the door, and the time that he is there, there dare not be any so

* The Voyage and Travell of M. Cæsar Fredericke, Merchant of Venice, into the East Indies and beyond the Indies (1563). Translation. Hakluyt Voyages, V, 394.

of the same caste, then decorates the girl by putting [613] on anklets, etc. The purōhit (officiating priest) called [564] Elayath (a low class of Brāhmans) then gives the tāli [793] to the Mānavālan, and the family astrologer shouts [787] muhurtham (auspicious hour), and the Manavālan, putting his sword on the lap, ties the tāli round the neck of the girl, who is then required to hold an arrow and a looking-glass in her hand. In rich families [556] a Brāhmani sings certain songs intended to bless the [533] couple. In ordinary families who cannot procure her presence, a Nāyar, versed in songs, performs the office. The boy and girl are then carried by enangans to [783] a decorated apartment in the inner part of the house, where they are required to remain under a sort of pollution for three days. On the fourth day they bathe in some neighbouring tank (pond) or river, holding each other's hands. After changing their clothes they come home, preceded by a procession. Tom-toms (native [534] drums) and elephants usually form part of the procession, and turmeric water is sprinkled. When they come [231] home, all doors of the house are shut, and the Manavālan is required to force them open. He then enters the house, and takes his seat in the northern wing thereof. The aunt and female friends of the girl then approach, and give sweetmeats to the couple. The girl then serves food to the [264] boy, and, after taking their meal together from the same leaf, they proceed to the booth, where a cloth is severed into two parts, and each part given to the Manavālan and girl separately in the presence of enangans and friends. The severing of the cloth is supposed to [586] constitute a divorce." "The tearing of the cloth," [184] Mr. Fawcett writes, "is confined to South Malabar. These are the essentials of the ceremony, an adjunct to [765] which is that, in spite of the divorce, the girl observes

585
217
656
therein laid down, it shall have the incidence of a legal marriage; that is to say, the wife and children shall be entitled to maintenance by the husband or father, respectively, and to succeed to half his self-acquired property, if he dies intestate; while the parties to such a sambandham cannot register a second sambandham during its continuance, that is, until it is terminated by death or by a formal application for divorce in the Civil Courts. The total number of sambandhams registered under the Act has, however, been infinitesimal, and the reason for this is, admittedly, the reluctance of the men to fetter their liberty to terminate sambandham at will by such restrictions as the necessity for formal divorce, or to undertake the burdensome responsibility of a legal obligation to maintain their wife and offspring. If, as the evidence recorded by the Malabar Marriage Commission tended to show, 'a marriage law in North Malabar, and throughout the greater part of South Malabar, would merely legalise what is the prevailing custom,' it is hard to see why there has been such a disinclination to lend to that custom the dignity of legal sanction." * The following applications to register sambandhams under the Act were received from 1897 to 1904 :—

[586]

585
187
656

	Nāyars.	Tiyans.	Others.	Total.
1897	28	6	2	36
1898	8	2	4	14
1899	8	2	4	14
1900	8	..	9	17
1901	3	...	1	4
1902	...	...	...	...
1903	2	...	...	2
Total ...	57	10	20	87

* Gazetteer of Malabar.

796 themselves in the neatest and grandest possible attire. [302] They also darken the fringes of their eyelids with a sticky preparation of soot mixed up with a little oil or ghee, and sometimes with a superficial coating of [276] antimony powder. They also wear white, black, or red marks down the middle of their foreheads. They also chew betel, and thus redden their mouths and lips. [526] They then proceed to the enjoyment of another prominent item of pleasure, viz., swinging to and fro on what is usually known as an uzhinjal, or swing made [262] of bamboo. On the festival day, after the morning bath is over, they take a light meal, and in the noon the family dinner is voraciously attacked, the essential and almost universal ingredients being ordinary ripe plantain fruits, and a delicious preparation of arrowroot powder purified and mixed with jaggery (crude sugar) or sugar, and also cocoanut. Then, till evening, dancing and [593] merry-making are ceaselessly indulged in. The husband population are inexcusably required to be present in the wives' houses before evening, as they are bound to do on [586] the Ōnam and Vishu occasions. Failure to do this is looked upon as a step, or rather the first step, on the part of the defaulting husband towards a final separa- [132] tion or divorce from the wife. Despite the rigour of the bleak December season during which the festival commonly falls, heightened inevitably by the constant blowing of the cold east wind upon their moistened frames, these lusty maidens derive considerable pleasure from their early baths, and their frolics in the water. The biting cold of the season, which makes their persons shiver and quiver, becomes to them in the midst of all their ecstatic frolics an additional source of pleasure. The two items described above, viz., the swinging and beating of the water, have each their own distinctive

31: Slater S-5' (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Kerala AWII

582 837 *Marriage customs.*—The custom of marriage before puberty is prevalent among Hindus, excepting Nambudris and Nayars. The Nambudris or Malabar Brahmans can give their daughters in marriage at any time they like or not marry them at all. Only the eldest male member of a Nambudri family can marry in his own caste. All the other sons keep Nayar women as mistresses. The eldest member can marry more than one wife, but many women of necessity have to remain unmarried.

[428] [586] The case of Nayars is entirely different. They follow a different system of inheritance, i.e., descent through the female. The result of this system is that the female is at full liberty to choose or to divorce husbands as she likes. The man also has the same liberty. As a consequence of the different systems of inheritance their marriage custom is also different. Before puberty some person closely connected with the family ties the sacred string round the neck of the girl. This custom is purely formal and does not make them husband and wife. Nowadays this formal business is done by the mother of the girl at the temple in the presence of God. After puberty the man who really wants to marry the girl (he must be of the same caste or some one belonging to a higher caste, preferably a Nambudri) comes, and performs the real marriage. This real marriage is binding only so long as he and she will. Divorce can be had at any time by a mere word. The woman can marry again. The death of the man does not make [585] the woman a widow. There is no widowhood for Nayar woman. In fact there is no marriage among the Nayars. What actually happens is that somebody comes and lives with a woman for a time, then leaves, and both live with others. The only restriction is that two men cannot live with one woman at the same time, but one man can cohabit with any number of women at the same time. The children [428] born of such unions inherit the property of the uncle since the descent is by the female line. Nowadays there is a strong opinion against this system and the descent from father to son is advocated by the educated few, and the proposed regulations in Cochin are attempts to make marriage binding and permanent and dissoluble only under certain circumstances, widows being still allowed to remarry.

[587] [595] With regard to all other Hindus, marriage before puberty prevails. But among the lower classes widow-marriage is allowable, money for a bridegroom is not demanded, and even polyandry is prevalent among certain sections of the Tiyyas. But only brothers can share a wife. A brother can marry his widowed sister-in-law. *Divorce* is allowed in cases of serious infidelity but divorced men and women can marry again.

562 *The purdah system* is followed by the Nambudri women alone in Malabar. They cannot see men. Whenever they come out they hold a big native kind of umbrella to hide their faces and come to the temple, etc. The ideas about the purdah system among them are changing nowadays and the abandonment of the system is hoped for in a few years. The Nambudris are also advocating changes in their marriage customs.

428 The property of a Nambudri or Nayar family cannot be divided among the family sons. The eldest has the right to manage the property and enjoy the profits. The other members of the family have a right for maintenance only. When the eldest dies the next to him in age comes to the position. Inthe case of a Nambudri

4: Yalman E-4,5 (1954-1956) 1971 AX4 Sinhalese
Kerala AW11

564 here turns out to be patrilineal and patrilocal. We shall see that, as
611 usual, the question of descent is attached to the same general struc-
[591] tures as elsewhere.

613 We first note that the "patrilineage" of the South is called a *taravad* like the matrilineal units of the Nayar. The patrilineage is reported to be exogamous with a depth of five to seven generations united by the worship of lineage gods, ancestors, and snakes. Marriage tends to be
595 patrilocal, and one of the interesting features of the Tiyyar of this
[594] area is that, as with the Sinhalese, polyandrous marriages are freely
[171] permitted. A woman is married to a group of brothers who have access
585 to her, it is said, by order of seniority. The ceremony of marriage
171 again involves the gift of the cloth, and we note the custom of feeding the groom or grooms and the bride with porridge and milk as with various groups in Ceylon.

593 Inheritance is in the male line, but women retain rights in their
[428] natal household. Indeed, this right is expressed in the customary rela-
[586] tions between brothers and sisters. At divorce, the woman returns to her brother. Her eldest brother is considered her guardian. At the
[765] death of a married woman, her brothers and their children observe
[783] ritual pollution. At the death of a man, his sister's sons observe pollution and perform mourning offerings to his spirit.

604 The customary claim of the MB and the FZ are given recognition in
588 numerous ceremonies. In the prepuberty rituals, a girl goes through
[613] a mock-marriage ceremony with a boy from a "lineage" into which
[605] she might marry, who clearly stands to her in the relation of cross-cousin. Her "mother's brother's wife" (FZ?) parts her hair in certain pregnancy ceremonies. The ritual husband-boy is brought by his MB, and the girl by her MB. The boy places the *tali* necklace—indicative of married status—on her neck, where it is tied by her FZ.

582 Gough notes that cross-cousin marriage is "preferential," though
605 with the observation that it is not "enjoined to the extent" that it is
114 in the North (1955*a*, p. 62). It is clear that this statement refers to actual cross-cousin, not categorical cross-cousin, marriage. We are informed that parallel cousins on both sides are tabooed and must conclude that here again we have the Dravidian pattern of categorical cross-cousin marriage.

601 I have no information about the terminology of reference or address,
576 though it seems likely that terms of reference, at least, are identical to those of the North Tiyyar.

121 I think that all the elements of the general structure can be detected
602 in this system. There is categorical cross-cousin marriage, and the various claims of the MB and FZ upon Ego are indicated in ritual terms. This is quite in accordance, as we noted before, with the strong